

P12

NADAL
CREATES HISTORY
WITH 21ST
GRAND SLAM



P13

GREEN ENERGY
OMAN PROJECT TO
UNLOCK HUGE ICV,
JOB OPPORTUNITIES



P20

THIS LITHUANIAN
IS BOWLED BY THE
OMAN PAVILION
AT EXPO 2020



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT OF ITALY

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Sergio Mattarella of the Italian Republic on being re-elected as President of his country for a new term. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of success to President Mattarella in leading the Italian people towards further progress and welfare. His Majesty also wished the relations between the two countries further development and prosperity. — ONA

540 JOB VACANCIES IN PRIVATE SECTOR

The Ministry of Labour on Sunday announced 540 job vacancies in the private sector. Of the announced jobs, 150 are for holders of Bachelor's degree or higher. Another 96 jobs are for post-GED (General Education Diploma) holders, while 294 are for GED holders. The move comes to support the private sector and to stimulate the employment of the national workforce. This announcement is considered the fourth batch of job vacancies in the private sector within the initiative of wage subsidy.



GREEN MENTS

SUNDAY SESSION

BEING MINDFUL



INSIDE



NORTH KOREA TEST-FIRES MOST POWERFUL MISSILE

P6



RUSSIA SAYS WANTS 'RESPECTFUL' TIES WITH US

P7

Race for Bilarab Bin Haitham Award gathers momentum

MUSCAT: For the third week in a row, Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design continued to attract inputs from Omani youth who showcased a wide spectrum of designs this year, notably to highlight the significance of the seaport enclave of the Wilayat of Muttrah. The aim is to build a landmark symbolising the past 50 years of renaissance in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as the launch of the country's flagship development programme, Oman Vision 2040. In an approximate area of 7,500 sqm, the seafront site comprises Port Sultan Qaboos and boasts a wide view of captivating natural scenery that has for ages been a tourist hotspot, besides its historical and cultural prominence in Omani civilisation. Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design requires the competitors to introduce the primary idea of the project by sending a lay-out of the site with full details of facilities proposed to be set up and sketches and diagram in A3 maps, in addition to a project summary of not more than 500 words. Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design is accessible via its website ([www.bha.om](#)). The deadline for sending contributions is February 5, 2022. The arbitration committee will sort out the works and contact the participants on February 27 to discuss details in the preliminary round. The award is open for specialists in architectural design, urban planning and architecture-related specialisations, including students and job-seekers aged 35 years and above. The prize was launched on January 15, 2022. The top performers will be shortlisted in three participants who can claim the top three places. — ONA

GREETINGS CONVEYED TO KUWAIT EMIR



Shaikh Nawaf Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, received Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister. Sayyid Badr conveyed the greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Emir of Kuwait. **SEE ALSO P3**

Snow-hit US cancels 1,400 flights

NEW YORK: About 1,400 US flights were cancelled early on Sunday after the northeastern part of the country was walloped by a fierce winter storm a day earlier, with much quieter weather expected on Sunday. Several US states had declared emergencies in response to the storm, which formed in the Atlantic Ocean off the Carolinas and was forecast to continue depositing snow into Sunday morning as it moved north to Maine. The total number of



flight cancellations within, into, or out of the United States was about 1,400 as of 10:30 am ET. Another 647 US-related flights

were delayed. The LaGuardia Airport and the John F Kennedy International Airport in New York City and the Boston Logan International Airport each had over 200 flight cancellations as of early on Sunday. The fierce winter storm on Saturday dropped more than 2 feet of snow on some areas while packing high winds, prompting thousands of flight cancellations and leading governors in Rhode Island and other states to curtail access to the roads. **SEE ALSO P7**

Investments in tourism sector hit RO 6 billion

MAJID AL HATTALI

MUSCAT: The total volume of the existing and future investments in mega tourism projects and integrated tourism complexes has exceeded RO 6 billion. Besides, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is currently implementing other projects at a value of more than RO 500 million as at the end of 2021. In an exclusive interview with *Oman Arabic*, sister publication of the *Observer*, Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, said that the ministry's investments during the upcoming period will focus mainly on developing integrated tourism complexes, completing the establishment of Oman Botanic Garden, developing hotel projects and tourist camps, developing adventure tourism projects, investing and operating historic sites and developing services in various tourist and historic sites in order to enhance the tourism industry in the Sultanate of Oman. As per the National Investment

“
The ministry's investments during the upcoming period will focus mainly on developing integrated tourism complexes and aims to get RO 3 billion investments
”

SALIM BIN MOHAMMED AL MAHROUQI
Minister of Heritage and Tourism

Programme, the ministry aims to bring in at least RO 3 billion over the 2021-2023 period, the minister confirmed that the Sultanate of Oman boasts of unique tourism components that qualify it to attract all tourist groups from inside and outside the country. The ministry is aware of the importance of providing services in tourist sites and destinations. **TURN TO P3**

Spending on food to increase manifold by 2025

SAMUEL KUTTY
[@samkuttvvp](#)

Spending on food is expected to grow at a faster pace than the consumer price index (CPI) by 2025 indicating real gains for the Sultanate of Oman's food sector. As a proportion of total household budgets, the average household is forecast to spend 30.4 per cent on food by 2025,

an increase of 23.2 per cent compared to 2006. “The increase is primarily driven by the rapid growth of hypermarkets in the country over this period, and a rise in price consciousness among consumer base”, points out a report by Fitch Solutions. This is also followed by the oil price shock in 2014-2016 and the introduction of a 5 per cent value

added tax in 2021. The largest proportion of food spending in the Sultanate of Oman goes towards meat and poultry, accounting for nearly a third of total food spending. This category is dominated by poultry spending. **KEY STAPLE** Dairy is a key staple in consumer diets in the country, with the

average household forecast to allocate 13 per cent of total food spending to dairy by 2025, supported by an increase in domestic production. “We believe that a health trend is gradually emerging in the Sultanate of Oman, reflected by modest proportional declines in food categories that are associated with health risks, such as sugar and sugar products and baked goods”, says the report. According to the report, the CPI will average 2.2 per cent annually over 2007-2025, food spending will expand a yearly average of 7.6 per cent. “We project total food spending to reach \$4.1 billion in the Sultanate of Oman in 2025, representing 4.7 per cent of total food spending in the GCC region”, it points out. **TURN TO P3**



Shura reviews investment status in SEZs



MUSCAT: The members of Majlis Ash'shura reviewed details of the local and international investments and growth indicators of projects in the special economic zones and free zones across the Sultanate of Oman, through a visual display presented by Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, on Sunday.

During the presentation, Dr Al Sunaidy explained the authority's objectives in creating economic drives that strive to employ the competitive advantages of the Sultanate of Oman to

realise a balanced, diversified and sustainable economic development by exploiting natural resources domestically including oil and gas, renewable energy, minerals and fisheries wealth in a manner that boosts local value added. This is in addition to developing the tourism industry and generating job opportunities.

Al Sunaidy also spoke about the most prominent advantages and incentives offered by the authority which include exemption of equipment and raw materials from customs duties, exemption from corporate income tax for a specific period

of time, allowing foreign capital, no restrictions on the importing, trading and transferring of foreign currencies, in addition to granting usufruct rights to state-owned lands for a long-term period.

The visual presentation explained the most prominent achievements of the economic zones, projects and investment alliances particularly in the Special Economic Zone of Duqm which represents a development engine in the Al Wusta Governorate and a regional hub for renewable energy, hydrocarbons and logistics services, and a base for the export industry.

The members of Majlis Ash'shura raised a number of questions focusing on the volume of actual investments and their growth indicators in the economic and free zones, the mechanisms for selecting the locations of zones, the extent to which the zones are prepared to use alternative energy in light of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The members also discussed the most important challenges that affect attracting foreign direct and local investments to the special economic zones and free zones and the government's

efforts to overcome these challenges in a way that enhances investment opportunities and boosts revenues to GDP and the importance of digital transformation in this field.

The members of Majlis Ash'shura discussed with the chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones the extent to which the industrial zones contribute to the GDP. They discussed ways of enhancing investment opportunities in a way that boosts the expected growth rates.

Responding to a member's question about the delay in clearing investment procedures

in the economic and free zones, Al Sunaidy said that the one-stop-shop makes it easier for investors to clear investment procedures related to the economic and free zones.

Some members stressed the importance of providing job opportunities for Omanis in various specialisations, while others pointed out the importance of prioritising the local community in employment. The members emphasised the importance of having clear-cut economic feasibility studies for young Omanis' projects to facilitate their implementation in the economic and free zones.



Conference aims to enhance production in fisheries sector

RIYADH: A delegation from the Sultanate of Oman is taking part in the International Conference and Exhibition on Fisheries, held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Sultanate of Oman's delegation is headed by Eng Yaqoub bin Khalfan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Fisheries.

The participation in the conference comes within the framework of the Sultanate of Oman's keenness in developing the fisheries field being an economic sector that is vital within Oman Vision 2040, as well as for its economic and social importance.

The event is considered an

opportunity to get familiar with regional and international approaches in enhancing fishing, fish farming and value-added fish industries. The conference sees the participation of representatives from 29 countries. It also includes 6 sessions, with 50 local and international speakers. Moreover, 70 international and local exhibitors are taking part in the event, including 7 Omani companies operating in various related areas.

The Sultanate of Oman's delegation comprises several companies from the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and private companies. — ONA

Avoid fishing in troubled waters through a marine cover

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

The fisheries sector is one of the main pillars of the national economy in the Sultanate of Oman, and investment in this sector achieves a good economic return.

Marine insurance provides necessary protection to seafarers from the dangers of their maritime activities, including natural disasters. It also stimulates and encourages people to practice the fishing profession.

The government has been paying attention to developing and improving productivity and quality and increasing competitiveness in this sector.

The fishermen and their expensive boats are exposed to different climatic conditions and damage threats that compels them to have insurance protection.

Salem al Daoudi, Director of the Marine Insurance and Work Injuries, Oman United Insurance Company, said, "There are imminent dangers at sea, and they vary. The machine may stop working, severe turbulence, getting lost, etc. The government has granted great facilities to fishermen, in return, we all have to obtain this insurance coverage to ensure our businesses sustainability".

The insurance policy ranges



from RO 70 to RO 150, depending on its type. In return, fishermen get a year's protection from any possible risk.

"Marine insurance is not an insurance of a boat or cargo, but rather it is more comprehensive. The insurance of marine fishing boats has three types. The comprehensive document covers the boat, its equipment, machinery and passengers, excluding the owner of the boat or the captain in case of large fishing vessels. This insurance covers damages to the boat or other boats," al Daoudi explained.

"The second document is the

third party which covers the risks caused by a boat to other boats, where the compensation company compensates the other boat. This is similar to the car insurance mechanism."

However, the third type covers a boat in case of a total loss, like a burning, accident or permanent damage caused by drowning or being hit by a cliff, where the boat is beyond repair.

Al Daoudi advised that if a person had got a loan for his project, it would be better to take the comprehensive document because it covers the boat with the value of the loan and covers passengers.

The Finance and Insurance Committee of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry has adopted the idea of preparing and extracting a unified marine insurance policy for boats, ships and equipment, in addition to personal accidents related to the Omani market, in accordance with the requirements of international laws and norms and the Omani market.

A Royal Decree stipulates that owners of artisanal, coastal and commercial fishing boats and vessels must secure their vessels according to the laws and regulations in force.



Follow us on **facebook**
omanobserver

oman

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

MONDAY | JANUARY 31 | 2022

3



Arab FM's hold consultative meeting in Kuwait

KUWAIT: The Sultanate of Oman took part in the consultative meeting of the Arab foreign ministers, held in the State of Kuwait. Oman's delegation was led in the meeting by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister.

The meeting reviewed a range of current issues of concern to the Arab countries. It also reiterated the importance of solidarity

and cooperation among the Arab countries in dealing with the challenges facing the Arab region.

The meeting also laid emphasis on enhancing pillars of security and stability and realising aspirations of development and prosperity for leaderships and peoples of the Arab countries.

Meanwhile, Shaikh Mishal al Ahmed al Jaber al Sabah, Deputy

Emir, Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait, on Sunday received the Arab foreign ministers participating in the consultative meeting, hosted by Kuwait.

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, conveyed greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Shaikh Nawaf al Ahmed al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait.

The meeting underscored the importance of Arab solidarity and cooperation towards regional issues; the foremost of which is the Palestinian cause.

It also touched on regional and international matters of common interest.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Sabah al Khalid al Sabah, Prime Minister of Kuwait. — ONA



Investments in tourism RO 6 billion

FROM P1

The tourism sector's recovery plan from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, has been approved. Most of the plan's pivots target to enhance domestic tourism and an amount of RO 5 million has been allocated to projects that can upgrade local tourism.

In order to fully implement the projects included in the plan, the ministry has coordinated with the offices of the governors to seek their opinions and identify the priorities and mechanisms for implementation and operation of these projects. Among the most important projects that serve local tourism is the ministry's contribution to the development of the surrounding area of Ain Al Kasfah in the Wilayat of Al Rus-taq and Ain Al Thawara in the Wilayat of Nakhl.

This is in addition to the development of the most important beaches in the governorates of Dhofar, North Al Batinah, South Al Sharqiyah, and Fins beach in the Wilayat of Qurayat.

This includes the construction of walkways, children's games, and service facilities such as cafes, restaurants and toilets and green spaces in some important valleys, such as Wadi Bani Awf, Wadi Bani Khalid, and the governorates of Al Dakhiliyah and Dhofar.

Oman, Finland explore ways to boost trade, investments



MUSCAT: Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, received the Finnish Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, on Sunday.

The two sides reviewed the bilateral relations, as well as fields of investment and economic cooperation. They also discussed mat-

ters of common interest.

The meeting explored the incentives offered by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

It also touched on available opportunities in the two countries, particularly in the fields of tourism, industry, research, mining and economic diversification sec-

tors that are targeted by Oman Vision 2040.

Moreover, an agreement of cooperation was signed by companies from both countries, which will contribute in the transfer of knowledge and grooming the skills of Omani youth.

The meeting was attended by officials from both sides. — ONA

Defence official heads to India for meeting

MUSCAT: Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence, left here on Sunday for India to lead the Omani side in the 11th meeting of the Joint Military Cooperation Committee between the ministries of defence of the two countries.

The meeting will be held in New Delhi from January 31 to February 1.

The Secretary General is accompanied during the visit by a military delegation comprising of senior officers from the Ministry



of Defence and the Sultan's Armed Forces.

Al Zaabi was seen off at Al Seeb Air Base by Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad

bin Sultan al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO), Ambassador of India to Oman and senior SAF officers.

— ONA

Spending on food to rise manifold by 2025

FROM P1

As per the break-ups given by the global agency, out of the total food spending, the average Omani household will spend more than 55.7 per cent of their food budget on three food categories in 2025.

These categories are meat and poultry 29.3 per cent of total food spending, bread, rice and cereals 13.4 per cent and dairy 13 per cent.

The remaining eight categories will account for 44.3 per cent of total food spending, suggesting that Omani food spending patterns are relatively diverse by international standards.

The Sultanate of Oman's population has increased by 1.04 per cent to 4.527 million at the end of 2021 compared to 4.481 million in 2020, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

In a bid to improve food security in the country, the Sultanate of Oman seeks to ramp up domestic meat production over the years to come.

In its diversification programme, the meat and poultry sector was identified as an area with many production opportunities.

Regarding poultry, the government aims to increase

the self-sufficiency rate to 86 per cent in 2030 and 96 per cent in 2040, up from 36 per cent in 2016. As such, strong investment in the country's poultry sector is expected to meet the government's self-sufficiency targets over the coming years.

"We already see this playing out, with domestic producer Dhofar Poultry announcing in January 2021 that it will increase its production from 8,000 tonnes in 2019 to 10,000 tonnes in 2021", the report affirms.

Locally produced poultry is likely to be sold at a lower price point than that of imported meat in retail channels, again placing downward pressure on retail prices.

With regard to health and wellness trends, the report points out that the Sultanate of Oman has not implemented tougher measures against foods that are associated with health risks, unlike some GCC countries, implemented a sugar tax (for beverages only) and is set to introduce mandatory traffic light food labelling.

"If the Sultanate of Oman were to launch tougher measures to combat obesity over the coming years, we believe that would put further downward pressure on sugar and confectionery and baked goods spending", it suggests.

CLARIFICATION: In the population report published in Sunday's edition of *Observer* Page 1, the expatriate population was mentioned as 2,723,329. It should be read as 1,723,329. The error is regretted.

Omicron poses threat to those with medical conditions



VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Sultanate of Oman on Monday reported nearly 6,000 cases (5,693) for three days, including nine deaths.

With the recovery rate showing a slowdown, 89 patients were admitted to hospitals across the country, taking the total number of inpatients to 299, including 53 in the Intensive Care Units (ICU).

Meanwhile, health experts have warned that chances of hospitalisation cannot be ruled out due to Omicron infection.

The Covid-19 can be still dangerous for unvaccinated, patients having medical issues though it is said not to be that life-threatening like the Delta

variant.

"Patients hospitalised with Omicron are said to be recovering faster without having to spend time in Intensive Care Units (ICUs).

"As with other variants, the elderly and those with chronic diseases are the most vulnerable," they said.

The WHO said the Covid-19 variant will be more contagious than Omicron, but the real question is whether it will be more deadly.

Noting that Covid is not over yet, WHO said, "You won't have to wear a mask forever and you won't have to physically distance forever. But for now, we need to keep doing this. We will get out of this, but we're not quite there yet."



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

What we take for granted when it comes to physical abilities may not be the same at old age or after an ailment.

So should one settle with fate or could occupational therapy be part of the recovery process?

National Health Service (NHS) suggests some practical tasks in the event of physical disability to recover from an illness or operation. These tasks are helpful in learning disabilities, mental health problems, or even in age-related challenges.

Occupational therapists look into all aspects of daily life whether it is at home, school or workplace.

In reality many do not seek the help of occupational therapists and the end result is deterioration in quality of life.

“Occupational therapy is a holistic profession, which means we treat our clients holistically.

We take into consideration everything from physical, social and emotional aspects,” said Najat bint Saif al Busaidiyah, Sultanate of Oman’s first occupational therapist.

She has been working in the profession since 1998 and is quick to point out that the nation needs more occupational therapists. She also hopes higher educational institutions in the country will introduce the majors in OT and ‘Speech and Language Therapy’ as there is a high requirement with the increase in population as well as disability cases.

“What OT does is, as its name suggests, use of occupation as a treatment modality to keep the client busy with exercise to engage the muscle or the limb or if it is a person who is cognitively disabled then we will use occupation as a treatment. Depending on the age it could be even be a game. The therapists are creative to utilise an occupation that is related to the client so if it is a child then

Occupational therapy is a holistic profession, which means we treat our clients holistically. We take into consideration everything from physical, social and emotional aspects

NAJAT BINT SAIF AL BUSAIDIYAH
Occupational therapist

it could be play sessions,” she explained.

The occupational therapists could start their work on clients as early as one week old infants or even premature babies and continue to observe the milestones and growth.

There are many sub-specialities in the profession.

“Had you spoken to me in the early 2000s I would not have much to say, but today we have a large range of clients we treat from physical disabilities to a wide spectrum of disabilities as well as depression and Schizophrenia,” she said and added “there is a difference on people’s awareness on how OT can help from when she started in 1998 to 2022.”

“In the past when I had just graduated it was me picking up clients for treatment and they did not know they will benefit from our intervention. However, now people are looking for occupational therapists and there is always a need. There are

requests from government and private hospitals for occupational therapists. The demand has grown along with the increase in people with disabilities. But people are aware of the therapy,” she noted.

She is extremely proud of the therapy because of its positive results through therapeutic ‘horseback riding’ or ‘hippo therapy’. They began initially as a collaboration with volunteers, but later with increasing number of professionals became independent project. Now a group of OT professionals have collaboration with Oman Sail.

“The first thing an occupational therapist does is an assessment and note what are the strengths and weak areas. We need more training for professionals in occupational therapy, speech therapy and physiotherapy, especially for children with disabilities. Occupational therapy has a distinct impact on children with autism spectrum,” she noted.

But the horses have made a vast

difference in the lives of children and adults.

CONSTANT TREATMENT

“The horseback riding has turned out to be a creative intervention and we have 12-year experience in it. We provide constant treatment sessions to build up the client’s capacity and strength to participate in strong sport such as sailing. With horseback riding we make sure people do not have a back bone injury or a heart condition that would stop them from riding. We take individuals with cognitive difficulties such as Down syndrome, autism, hyperactivity etc. Parents and teachers began to notice the change in the children.”

“Children who could not go to school because they lacked confidence, began to do so and other children began to show a change in the level of concentration and focus after the horseback riding sessions. Their lives got transformed,” she said with pride.



BLEED FOR A NOBLE CAUSE

Call to donate blood



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

There has been a general call by the Central Blood Bank, Ministry of Health (MoH) in Bausher, to donate blood to supply blood units to the hospitals.

Anyone who has not travelled outside of the country in the past four months, anyone who has recovered from Covid-19 or anyone who doesn't suffer from flu can approach the Blood Bank and take part in the national blood donation initiative.

"We call upon all individuals, public and private organisations to come forward and donate blood to meet the need of blood units across the public and private hospitals in the country", said Dr Zainab bint Salim al Araiimi, Director of Blood Banks Services at the Ministry of Health.

Organisations and their members have been requested to register for blood donation. A booking before blood donation is important to follow Covid-19 protocols.

"Any individual or organisation can take part in a blood donation camp in consultation with the Bausher Blood Bank. We welcome such initiatives", she added.

We call upon all individuals, public and private organisations to come forward and donate blood to meet the need of blood units across the public and private hospitals in the country

DR ZAINAB BINT SALIM AL ARAIMI

Director of Blood Banks Services

She said many organisations are coming forward to organise blood donation camps and support the initiative.

Several members of the World Malayali Federation (WMF) and the general public took part in the blood donation camp organised by the federation recently.

Amit Narang, the Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, inaugurated the campaign and offered support to the humanitarian initiative. Ullas Cheriyan, the organisation's

global coordinator, welcomed the enthusiasts. Ammujam Raveendran, Regional Coordinator, facilitated the campaign in liaison with the Blood Bank.

Sunil Kumar, National President, Rajan Kokkury, Babu Thomas, Ansar Jabir, Biju Thomas, Jiji Thomas, Moidu Vengatt, Shaikh Rafeeqe, and Lijihas Hussain led their respective teams to the campaign. Ashwathy from Nizwa and Rajan from Suhar mobilised the donors to Bausher Blood Bank.

A large number of women and youngsters volunteered to donate blood. More associations and alumni organisations are in touch with the Blood Bank to organise blood donation camps.

According to Blood Bank sources, 600 to 700 blood units are needed per week while the supply is less. The supply has come down by 40 per cent. The shortage is likely to continue due to the pandemic. Many people are not turning up to donate blood due to reasons like positive for Covid-19 or apprehension of contracting the virus if they are exposed to medical facilities or instruments. These fears, however, are unfounded.

'Discover Oman' programme makes staff aware of history

MUSCAT: The Zubair Corporation, together with Bait Al Zubair Museum, organised a special programme for its employees and families of its group companies. Entitled, "Discover Oman", the programme provides a unique opportunity for invitees to delve into and learn more about the rich history of the Sultanate of Oman, across various time periods. This was conducted through an exceptional visit to the Bait Al Zubair Museum, which hosts a unique collection of antiquities and artefacts that chronicle the historical stages of the Sultanate of Oman.

Commenting on the importance of the programme, Hilal bin Omar al Siyabi, Head of Corporate Services at The Zubair Corporation, said, "The 'Discover Oman' programme aims to bring together different generations, especially the youth and familiarise them with ancient Omani history and historical eras. Together with Bait Al Zubair Museum, we took the employees of the Corporation and subsidiaries, as well as their families, on an introductory



tour to enhance their knowledge of the national history of the country.

Since Bait Al Zubair Museum is one of the notable cultural facilities that host collections and antiquities dating back to different periods of Omani history, it supports the enrichment of knowledge of every visitor, with regard to the journey that built this proud nation.

"The organisation of this programme stems from the framework of the corporation's vision need to strengthen the citizens' culture of belonging to their beloved nation, by learning about its vast history. This also reinforces the strong partnership that we hold between the subsidiaries of the Zubair Corporation, which is a reflection of our joint teamwork", Hilal added.



540 job vacancies announced in private sector

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour on Sunday announced 540 job vacancies in the private sector.

Of the announced jobs, 150 are for holders of Bachelor's degree or higher.

Another 96 jobs are for post-GED (General Education Diploma) holders, while 294 are for GED holders.

The move comes to support the private sector and to stimulate the employment of the national workforce.

This announcement is the 4th batch of job vacancies in the private sector within the initiative of wage subsidy.

— ONA

Handle geysers carefully, CDAA tells domestic users

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The drop in temperature has prompted people to use heating equipment more. But unfortunately, there has also been an increase in the number of accidents involving room and water heaters for domestic purposes, according to the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA).



"During the winter, there has been an increase in accidents involving geysers and room heaters.

"This underlines the need for manufacturers to adhere to stringent standards and suppliers to represent efficient products", said a top official at the CDAA.

"However, this also clearly indicates that the end-users should follow some precautions while using the heating instruments", he added.

According to him, one should use high-quality geysers and those approved as per GCC specifications.

In addition, the supply of power should not be on while using warm water.

"Be conscious of switching off the geyser when you're using the warm water as chances are high to get a direct electric shock from the device through the water. Secondly, be watchful that the product complies with GCC standards", the CDAA representative said.

One should also be mindful of regular maintenance of heater connections and the cleanliness of every part of it regularly.

The CDAA mandate on safety suggests the uninterrupted flow of running water into the water heater to avoid the chances of a fire in the heaters.

"If you suspect any power leakage in the line, disconnect the power line immediately." He also cautioned to ensure that temperature settings should not exceed 60 degrees for the safe usage of geysers.



Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Heritage & Tourism

ANNOUNCEMENT OF AN INTERNATIONAL TENDER

Tender No. (International)	2/2022	Tender Name	Development of the attendance and departure system
Brief Description	The Ministry is planning to replace the current Time & Attendance software with a new system that have comprehensive features to manage employees' attendance in (MHT's) main building as well as all branches in different governorate, museums and other locations.		
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)	25 O.R		
Tender Document Sales End Date	20/02/2022		
Last Date for Bid Submission	16/03/2022		
Grade	Excellent, First, Second		
E-Tendering Portal	https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om		

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E.Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Bids are submitted that fulfill the technical conditions and specifications, accompanied by a tender bond from a local bank not less than (1%) of the bid value, valid for (90) days from the date of its submission.
 - Any bid that does not meet the required tender bond will not be considered.
 - The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids.
- The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@ita.gov.om or 24402200
For further information	Email : sotic@omantourism.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085



North Korea test-fires most powerful missile

SEOUL: North Korea on Sunday tested its most powerful missile since 2017, ramping up the firepower for its record-breaking seventh launch this month as Seoul warned nuclear and long-range tests could be next.

Pyongyang has never test-fired this many missiles in a calendar month before and last week threatened to abandon a nearly five-year-long self-imposed moratorium on testing long-range and nuclear weapons, blaming US “hostile” policy for forcing its hand.

With peace talks with Washington stalled, North Korea has doubled down on leader Kim Jong Un’s vow to modernise the regime’s armed forces, flexing Pyongyang’s military muscles despite biting international sanctions.

South Korea said on Sunday that North Korea appeared to be following a “similar pattern” to 2017 — when tensions were last at breaking point on the peninsula — warning Pyongyang could soon restart nuclear and intercontinental missile tests.



People watch a TV screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a railway station in Seoul. — AFP

North Korea “has come close to destroying the moratorium declaration”, South Korea’s

President Moon Jae-in said in a statement following an emergency meeting of Seoul’s National

Security Council. South Korea’s military said on Sunday it had “detected an

The missile was estimated to have hit a maximum altitude of 2,000 kms and flown around 800 kms for half an hour

intermediate-range ballistic missile fired at a lofted angle eastward towards the East Sea”. The missile was estimated to have hit a maximum altitude of 2,000 kilometres and flown around 800 kilometres for half an hour, Seoul’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said.

A lofted trajectory involves missiles being fired at a high angle instead of out to their full range.

“North Korea did similar tests with its emerging medium and long range missile technology in 2017,” tweeted Chad O’Carroll of specialist website NK News.

“So this would imply today’s test involves one of those missile types — or potentially something new. In other words, a big deal.”

The last time Pyongyang tested an intermediate-range missile was

the Hwasong-12 in 2017, which analysts said at the time was powerful enough to put the US territory of Guam in range.

Japan’s top government spokesman Hirokazu Matsuno said on Sunday that the ballistic missile “was one with intermediate-range or longer range”. The US condemned the launch, with a State Department spokesperson saying it was a “clear violation” of multiple UN Security Council resolutions.

Pyongyang has tested hypersonic missiles twice this month, as well as carrying out four launches of short-range ballistic and cruise missiles. Washington imposed fresh sanctions over the tests, prompting Pyongyang to vow a “stronger and certain” response to any attempt to rein it in.

Last week, leader Kim was photographed by state media inspecting an “important” munitions factory that produces “a major weapon system”. “Kim has been withholding his appetite for testing and provocations,” Soo Kim, an analyst at the RAND Corporation, said. — AFP



A Sudanese woman during a rally to protest against last year’s military coup in Khartoum. — AFP

Tear gas fired at Sudan anti-coup protesters

KHARTOUM: Sudanese security forces fired tear gas in Khartoum on Sunday at thousands protesting for civilian rule and against a military coup that took place last year, a correspondent said. Pro-democracy activists have upped calls for protests to restore a transition to civilian rule since the October 25 military takeover led by general Abdel Fattah al Burhan.

The coup, one of several in Sudan’s post-independence history, derailed a power-sharing arrangement between the army and civilians that had been painstakingly negotiated after the 2019 ouster of longtime ruler

Omar al Bashir.

Sunday’s demonstrations took place in the capital Khartoum, the neighbouring city of Omdurman, Gedaref state in the east, and the northern cities of Atbara and Dongola, according to witnesses.

Sudanese authorities warned protesters against heading towards Khartoum city centre as security forces sealed off streets leading to the presidential palace.

But protesters in the capital converged in large numbers as they headed towards the palace and police fired volleys of tear gas when they approached that destination, the correspondent said. — AFP

New Delhi’s homeless shiver through harsh cold snap

NEW DELHI: India’s capital New Delhi is shivering through an unusually harsh bout of harsh winter cold, blamed for killing scores of homeless people and leaving other hard-up residents struggling to keep warm.

The sprawling megacity’s 20 million inhabitants are accustomed to year-round weather extremes, from blistering summer heat to torrential downpours and thick, toxic smog at the end of autumn.

Still, the bracing chill and blustery rains this month have been an ordeal for many, with Delhi on Tuesday recording its coldest January day in nearly a decade.

“There’s no denying that it’s very cold,” 30-year-old Mukesh said from his bed at a homeless shelter on the weekend.

He and a small group of the shelter’s residents have taken to huddling around an improvised wood fire, a scene repeated around the city’s kerbsides each night this month.

“The last ten days have been very cold and especially this past week, there was not much sunshine. We have been worried because we have to try hard to

Extreme weather phenomena ‘are going to be much more frequent and also the severity of these events will (rise) in future’

keep warm,” Mukesh said.

Recent figures on homelessness across Delhi are hard to come by, but according to India’s 2011 census, around 47,000 of the city’s residents were sleeping rough.

Activists, however, say that is a vast underestimate. Official figures show the city’s homeless shelters are only able to accommodate around 9,300 people.

Sunil Kumar Aledia of the Centre for Holistic Development, who has worked with Delhi’s homeless population for decades, said the city has seen around 176 deaths from exposure to the cold so far this year.

“Because of these extreme temperatures, many people on the streets die,” he said.

India’s weather bureau has told local media that Delhi’s maximum daily temperatures have been between two and six degrees



Homeless people gathered besides a bonfire to keep themselves warm in a wintry evening in New Delhi. — AFP

Celsius below normal for most of January.

“This situation is not normal,” said Anjal Prakash of the Bharti Institute of Public Policy, a think-tank that has worked with the United Nations on climate change modelling.

Extreme weather phenomena “are going to be much more frequent and also the severity of

these events will (rise) in future”, he said.

The humans of Delhi are not the only ones suffering through the cold spell.

The city’s stray dogs often congregate around markets and as the cold sets in each year, many are put in special jackets and fed hot meals to help them endure the weather. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

BEIRUT

Lebanon warns against calls for postponing vote

A decision by Lebanon’s leading politician to step back from politics and boycott a parliamentary election in May must not be used as an excuse to call for a delay, the Maronite Christian patriarch said.

Cardinal Bechara Boutros Al Rai said he was surprised by three times-former prime minister Saad al Hariri’s decision and said he hoped they would still take part so the election “expresses the position of all Lebanese”.



Hariri’s decision has turned the electoral landscape on its head, adding to the uncertainties facing a country suffering a devastating financial meltdown.

BANGKOK

Oil spill threatens corals in eastern Thailand

Authorities are rushing to prevent an oil spill in eastern Thailand from damaging fragile corals, after officials said the leak that began last week was drifting towards more coastal areas. Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment Varawut Silpa-archa said it was crucial to try to prevent the main mass of oil from reaching the shore at Ao Prao, a small bay on Koh Samet, which is a popular resort island.

“If the oil reached inside this area it could impact the beach



and cause heavy damage to the shallow water corals,” Varawut said. The oil began leaking from a pipeline owned by Star Petroleum Refining Public Company Limited (SPRC) late on Tuesday.

PHNOM PENH

Cambodia to host Asean foreign ministers meet

Foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) will meet next month to discuss humanitarian aid for Myanmar, the current chair of the grouping, Cambodia, said. Cambodia’s foreign minister, and Asean special envoy, Prak Sokhonn, is a preparing for his first visit to Myanmar, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

“His priorities are to implement the five-point consensus which was agreed



unanimously and will be discussed during the upcoming Asean foreign ministers’ retreat,” it said, adding that the event was scheduled for February 16 and 17.



omanobserver.com/podcast

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

MONDAY | JANUARY 31 | 2022

7

In brief

■ ATHENS



GREEK GOVT FACES CENSURE VOTE OVER BLIZZARD RESPONSE

Greece's conservative government on Sunday faced a censure vote in parliament over its handling of a snowstorm that buried a key Athens motorway and left thousands without electricity for days. The motion was brought forward by main opposition leader Alexis Tsipras, but will not likely pass since the government of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis is set to secure at least 157 votes in the 300-seat parliament.

The vote will be held on Sunday evening, and can only pass with a majority in favour. Tsipras, the former prime minister who was defeated by Mitsotakis in 2019 national elections, has called the government's response a "fiasco".

■ BERLIN



GERMANY STORM KILLS ONE, INJURES TWO

One person died and two others were injured as violent winds uprooted trees and caused travel chaos in Germany. A 58-year-old man was killed in the town of Beelitz near the capital Berlin on Saturday evening when an election poster fell on him as he walked with his partner, local media reported citing the police. A falling tree injured a pedestrian in the northern city of Bremen, while in the northeastern Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania region a motorcyclist was seriously injured after colliding with an uprooted tree. Fallen branches and trees disrupted long-distance train services on Saturday evening and Sunday.

■ STUTTGART



MAYOR ANNOUNCES INDEPENDENT RUN IN NEXT POLL

The Green mayor of the German city of Tübingen, Boris Palmer, announced his intention to run for re-election as an independent candidate on Sunday, following a furore over his use of racist language. The regional Green party leadership voted in May to launch an investigation into various comments Palmer had made on subjects including race and migration that departed from the usual party line.

Palmer made a Facebook post earlier in May about German football player Dennis Aogo, in which Palmer used a racist term to describe the black player. — dpa



Russian FM favours 'respectful' ties with US

MOSCOW: Russia said on Sunday it wants "mutually respectful" relations with the United States and denied posing a threat to Ukraine, as the UK said it was preparing fresh sanctions against Moscow.

Tensions have soared between Moscow and Washington after Western governments accused Russia of amassing tens of thousands of troops on its border with ex-Soviet Ukraine.

The military build-up has sparked fears that Russia is planning an invasion, spooking Nato and its members in the region and prompting the Western alliance to explore bolstering its own deployments there.

"We want good, equal, mutually respectful relations with the US, like with every country in the world," Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told Russian TV on Sunday.

He added, however, that Russia does not want to remain in a position "where our security is infringed daily". Citing the encroachment of Nato near its eastern border, Russia has put forward security demands to Washington and the US-led military alliance. These include a guarantee that Nato will not admit new members, in particular Ukraine, and the United States will not establish new military bases in ex-Soviet countries.

Russia has also demanded a



Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov

Western leaders have scrambled to defuse the crisis by reaching out to Putin, while also vowing unprecedented sanctions should Moscow launch an attack

pullback of Nato forces deployed to eastern European and ex-Soviet countries that joined the alliance after the Cold War.

Lavrov said Nato's line of defence "continues moving eastwards" and has come "very close" to Ukraine, which according to him is "not ready" to join Nato.

Western leaders have scrambled to defuse the crisis by reaching out to Russian President Vladimir Putin, while also vowing unprecedented sanctions should Moscow launch an attack.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has called on the West to avoid stirring "panic" in the face of the Russian troop build-up, while Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said it was important to remain "firm" in talks with Moscow.

Britain said it is preparing to unveil sanctions against Moscow that would target companies close to the Kremlin.

"There will be nowhere to hide for Putin's oligarchs," UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said on Sunday.

Putin on Friday held a phone call with French President Emmanuel Macron and Britain's Boris Johnson is expected to speak with the Russian leader next week.

Russia has repeatedly denied planning an attack and said it is not looking to start a war.

"We don't want war. We don't need it at all," Nikolai Patrushev, head of Russia's powerful Security Council, told reporters on Sunday.

He added that Russia poses no threat to Ukraine.

"Even the Ukrainians, including officials say there is no threat," Patrushev said. Several Western officials are expected to visit Ukraine in the coming days, including French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, his German counterpart Annalena Baerbock and Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki.

— AFP

Dozens sentenced to death over murders of UN experts in Congo

DAKAR: About 50 people were sentenced to death, many in absentia, in Democratic Republic of Congo on Saturday in connection with the murders of UN experts Zaida Catalan and Michael Sharp in 2017, a defence lawyer in the case said.

A local immigration official was among those given death sentences while an army colonel was given 10 years in prison, said Tresor Kabangu, who represented several defendants in the trial. Congo has observed a moratorium on the death penalty since 2003 so those convicted will serve life sentences.

Human rights groups say investigators have ignored the potential involvement of higher-level officials, and Catalan and Sharp's families said they did not believe the ultimate masterminds had been brought to justice.

Catalan, a Swede, and Sharp, an American, were investigating violence between government forces and a militia in the central Kasai region in March 2017 when they were stopped along the road by armed men, marched into a field and executed.

Congolese officials have blamed the killings on the Kamuina Nsapu militia. They initially denied any state agents were involved but later arrested the colonel and several other officials who they said were working with the rebels.

After a nearly five-year trial marked by repeated delays and

the deaths of several defendants in custody, a military court in the city of Kananga delivered its verdict on Saturday.

Among those sentenced to death was Thomas Nkashama, a local immigration official who met with Catalan and Sharp the day before their fatal mission, Kabangu said. Others were alleged members of the militia. Colonel Jean de Dieu Mambweni, who also met with Catalan and Sharp before their mission, was sentenced to 10 years, Kabangu said.

A number of the defendants were convicted in absentia because they were either never apprehended or escaped from custody.

Catalan's sister, Elisabeth Morseby, said after the verdict that testimony in the case was of dubious reliability given how much time the defendants had spent together in prison and said the conviction of Mambweni was a smokescreen.

"In order for the truth to emerge, all suspects, including those higher up in the hierarchy, need to be questioned, which has not yet been done," she said.

Sharp's mother, Michele, said she was glad some perpetrators were being held accountable, but wondered who gave the orders.

"Surely someone in the upper echelons of power," she said. "We await further developments."

— Reuters



A peacekeeper during a patrol around the new base set up in Rugari, 50 km from the city of Goma, as the population watches the military in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. — AFP

Thousands of US flights cancelled due to storm

WASHINGTON: About 1,300 US flights were cancelled early on Sunday after the northeastern part of the country was walloped by a fierce winter storm. Several US states had declared emergencies in response to the storm, which formed in the Atlantic Ocean off the Carolinas and was forecast to continue depositing snow into Sunday morning as it moved north to Maine.

The total number of flight cancellations within, into, or out of the United States was about 1,300 as of 9 am, according to flight-tracking website FlightAware.com. Another 480 US-related flights were delayed, the data showed.

The LaGuardia Airport in New York City and the Boston Logan International Airport each had over 200 flight cancellations as of early on Sunday.

The fierce winter storm on



A man walks through the snow along a street in the Brooklyn borough of New York. — AFP

Saturday dropped more than 2 feet of snow on some areas while packing high winds, prompting

thousands of flight cancellations and leading governors in Rhode Island and other states to curtail

access to the roads. Much quieter weather was expected across the East Coast on Sunday, the National

Weather Service said.

The conditions on the Massachusetts island of Nantucket were improving after the powerful nor'easter flooded roads and caused a large power outage on Saturday, the local police department said. The water was deep enough for two high school students to row a canoe along a flooded street, according to a photo posted on social media.

In Massachusetts, about 56,000 out of 2.6 million customers were without electricity as of early on Sunday, according to the PowerOutage.us website.

The weather may have contributed to the death of an elderly woman who was found on Saturday in a hotel parking lot in Uniondale, New York, with her car window open, according to an officer at the Nassau County Police Department in Long Island.

— Reuters

The grass is greener where we water it



Hyesha Barrett
@coach_hyesha

Hyesha is a certified Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner based in Muscat. She is affiliated with the Whispers of Serenity Clinic

When we recognise our own doubts and work on improving them, we can only really flourish as people.

We will then continually grow and our grass will thrive and prosper.

If we are in a negative headspace and look longingly at other people's lives, we can easily let the comparison game take over. When we allow our minds to wander this will inflict painful thoughts such as: "He has a better job than I do... She has a thinner body than me... They have nicer kids than we do..." The only thing the comparison game allows us to do, is make us feel worse about ourselves.

The constant looking at others and wondering why we are not in the same place as they are is detrimental to one's well-being, to one's self-esteem, to one's confidence. And the incredible

thing is that the very same people who you are looking at and desiring you had their lives are looking over at your qualities and wishing they were in your shoes.

Such is the wonderment of life. It's in our human nature to want what we don't have, to not be happy nor grateful and to allow the negativity to fester.

When we're able to look at the lives of others objectively, hold love and compassion for them and ourselves wholeheartedly, rather than allow jealousy and envy to permeate us, then we are on the winning side.

"The grass is always greener on the other side" is a famous proverb which can be traced as far back as the poetry of Publius Ovidius Naso, better known as Ovid (43 BC-17 AD), who wrote "Fertilior seges est alenis semper in agris", translated to

IT'S IN OUR HUMAN NATURE TO WANT WHAT WE DON'T HAVE, TO NOT BE HAPPY NOR GRATEFUL AND TO ALLOW THE NEGATIVITY TO FESTER

the harvest is always more fruitful in another man's fields.

However, in today's modern world, with all the new learnings and wisdom we have gathered over many years, the saying has since transformed into "the grass is greener where we water it".

When we focus on ourselves and concentrate on our own problems, we can then find solutions. When we recognise our own doubts and work on improving them, we can only really flourish as people. We will then continually grow and our grass will thrive and prosper.

Upon concentrating on our own gardens, we will notice the weeds and pluck them out. If we look at other's gardens, we can lose focus and figuratively speaking, these very weeds will overtake the beauty of our garden, so realistically our health and our overall mental well-being will suffer.

Cherishing our own relationships, holding space for our challenges, owning self-love and compassion for our sensitivities and insecurities all the while celebrating our wins will allow us to grow.

Staying in gratitude for what you have will vibrate you on a higher level of happiness. The "grass is greener" syndrome prevents you from acknowledging and appreciating what you currently have. The inability to be grateful for what you have is only exacerbated by the fact that you are constantly

looking elsewhere to what you believe will be better.

However, when we take care of our mental, physical and emotional well-being with nutritional foods all the while stimulating our minds with educational materials, (so not being swayed by temptation nor distractions of mindless TV shows or endless social media scrolling) and replace these with reading more books, listening to informational podcasts, surrounding ourselves with like-minded people who energise us as opposed to deplete our energy, these are crucial to ensuring we have a healthy, happy and prosperous life.

I hope you are taking the time to tend to your grass, pluck out the weeds, turn up the soil and plant seeds so your garden will have ample space for beautiful flowers to bloom.

Turmoil ahead for Italy after bruising presidential vote

ELLA IDE

The re-election of President Sergio Mattarella in Italy has temporarily averted a political disaster and may ease the passing of key reforms, but Machiavellian plotting by political parties has just begun, analysts warn.

After six days of deadlock and amid fears the government could fall, the 80-year old — who had made it clear he did not want to serve a second term — agreed on Saturday to put parliament out of its misery.

It was, he told the country, an exceptional situation: Debt-laden Italy, one of the worst hit by the 2020 pandemic in Europe, was "still going through a serious health, economic and social emergency".

Mattarella needed at least 505 votes from an electoral college of 1,009 lawmakers and regional representatives in Saturday's vote. He won 759, earning another stint as president in spite of himself.

The only other serious contender for the job — Prime Minister Mario Draghi — was needed at the head of government to keep Rome on track with major reforms to the tax and justice systems and public sector.

Draghi, brought in by Mattarella last year, has been racing to ensure Italy qualifies for funds from the EU's post-pandemic recovery scheme, which amounts to almost €200 billion (\$225 billion) for Rome.

Many were concerned Italy would slip behind on the tight reform schedule should Draghi step down as prime minister, or that his elevation would spark snap elections in the eurozone's third largest economy. Mattarella's election removes that immediate risk. But fractures within Italy's parties have deepened over the past week and are expected to worsen further as campaigning intensifies ahead of a 2023 general election.

"The question is whether the key ingredient of Draghi's government — a broad, cross-partisan majority — will still be there in a few days", Francesco Galietti of political consultancy Policy Sonar said. "If not, the situation will rapidly become untenable".

"Wolfango Piccoli of the Teneo consultancy said rebuilding trust within the ruling coalition was "a near-impossible job", and a realignment was now likely "both within individual parties and alliances".

The biggest loser is Matteo Salvini, head of the anti-immigrant League, who had hoped to play kingmaker but instead failed to get his candidate elected and was forced to ally with the centre-left bloc.

— AFP

Why Is Silicon Valley still waiting for the next big thing?



CADE METZ

The writer is a technology correspondent with The NYT, covering artificial intelligence, driverless cars, robotics, virtual reality, and other emerging areas

It was a significant scientific milestone that some compared to the first flight at Kitty Hawk. Harnessing the mysterious powers of quantum mechanics, Google had built a computer that needed only 3 minutes and 20 seconds to perform a calculation that normal computers couldn't complete in 10,000 years.

But more than two years after Google's announcement, the world is still waiting for a quantum computer that actually does something useful. And it will most likely wait much longer. The world is also waiting for self-driving cars, flying cars, advanced artificial intelligence and brain implants that will let you control your computing devices using nothing but your thoughts.

Silicon Valley's hype machine has long been accused of churning ahead of reality. But in recent years, the tech industry's critics have noticed that its biggest promises — the ideas that really could change the world — seem further and further on the horizon. The great wealth generated by the industry in recent years has generally been thanks to ideas, like the iPhone and mobile apps, that arrived years ago.

Have the big thinkers of tech lost their mojo?

The answer, those big thinkers are quick to respond, is absolutely not. But the projects they are tackling are far more difficult than building a new app or disrupting another ageing industry. And if you look around, the tools that have helped you cope with almost two years of a pandemic — the home computers, the videoconferencing services and Wi-Fi, even the technology that aided researchers in the development of vaccines — have shown the industry hasn't exactly lost a step.

"Imagine the economic impact of the pandemic had there not been the infrastructure — the hardware and the software — that allowed so many white-collar workers to work from home and so many other parts of the economy to be conducted in a digitally mediated way", said Margaret O'Mara, a professor at the University of Washington who specialises in the history of Silicon Valley.

As for the next big thing, the big thinkers say, give it time. Take quantum computing. Jake Taylor, who oversaw quantum computing efforts for the

White House and is now chief science officer at the quantum start-up Riverlane, said building a quantum computer might be the most difficult task ever undertaken. This is a machine that defies the physics of everyday life.

A quantum computer relies on the strange ways that some objects behave at the subatomic level or when exposed to extreme cold, like metal chilled to nearly 460 degrees below zero. If scientists merely try to read information from these quantum systems, they tend to break. While building a quantum computer, Taylor said, "you are constantly working against the fundamental tendency of nature."

The most important tech advances of the past few decades — the microchip, the Internet, the mouse-driven computer, the smartphone — were not defying physics. And they were allowed to gestate for years, even dec-

THE WORLD IS ALSO WAITING FOR SELF-DRIVING CARS, FLYING CARS, ADVANCED AI AND BRAIN IMPLANTS THAT WILL LET YOU CONTROL YOUR COMPUTING DEVICES USING NOTHING BUT YOUR THOUGHTS IN THE FALL OF 2019, GOOGLE TOLD THE WORLD IT HAD REACHED 'QUANTUM SUPREMACY'

ades, inside government agencies and corporate research labs before ultimately reaching mass adoption.

"The age of mobile and cloud computing has created so many new business opportunities", O'Mara said. "But now there are trickier problems."

Still, the loudest voices in Silicon Valley often discuss those trickier problems as if they were just another smartphone app. That can inflate expectations.

People who aren't experts who understand the challenges "may have been misled by the hype", said Raquel Urtasun, a University of Toronto professor who helped oversee the development of self-driving cars at Uber and is now chief executive of the self-driving start-up Waabi.

Technologies like self-driving cars and artificial intelligence do not face the same physical obstacles as quantum computing. But just as researchers do not yet know how to build a viable quantum computer, they do not yet know how to design a car that can safely drive itself in any situation or a machine that can do anything the human brain can do.

Even a technology like augmented reality — eyeglasses that can layer digital images onto what you see in the real world — will require years of additional research and engineering before it is perfected.

Andrew Bosworth, Vice President at Meta, formerly Facebook, said that building these lightweight eyeglasses was akin to creating the first mouse-driven personal computers in the 1970s. Companies like Meta must design an entirely new way of using computers, before stuffing all its pieces into a tiny package.

Over the past two decades, companies like Facebook have built and deployed new technologies at a speed that never seemed possible before. But as Bosworth said, these were predominantly software technologies built solely with "bits" — pieces of digital information.

Building new kinds of hardware — working with physical atoms — is a far more difficult task. "As an industry, we have almost forgotten what this is like", Bosworth said, calling the creation of augmented reality glasses a "once-in-a-lifetime" project.

Technologists like Bosworth believe they will eventually overcome those obstacles and they are more open about how difficult it will be. But that's not always the case. And when an industry has seeped into every part of daily life, it can be hard to separate hand-waving from realism — especially when it is huge companies like Google and well-known personalities like Elon Musk drawing that attention.

— The New York Times

A nation’s blessing and gateway to the world



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
aljahdhami22@gmail.com

The Sultanate is Oman is witnessing remarkable changes, every single day, making an impact on people’s lives. Doors are always open to welcome for a good change for the nation and its subjects. The country has been interacting with different changes worldwide, hence it gets the best of it, so it develops accordingly. Consequently, every corner of the country has experienced a significant change, which promotes the lifestyle of Omanis and lifts their standard of living. As well, it contributes to the thriving nation-building process.

The daily needs and demands of a modern country and its people are increasing of course, so is the Sultanate of Oman getting distinctively and rapidly developing in most walks of life. Citizens and residents can easily access crucial infrastructure facilities and services and are benefitted alike. Tourists and travellers are too getting the advantage of the changes taking place in the country. Everybody is admiring and highly speaking about the way the country is portraying its image and reputation globally.

The Sultanate is Oman has proven to the world that its development march has been proceeding in the right direction. As the country is continuing to develop infrastructure, improve quality of human capital, best utilisation of its work force, everyday new projects and achievements are being seen. The development march, wrapped with all accomplishments made in various spheres, has marvelously impressed the world.

AS THE SULTANATE OF OMAN IS CONTINUING TO DEVELOP INFRASTRUCTURE, IMPROVE QUALITY OF HUMAN CAPITAL, BEST UTILISATION OF ITS WORK FORCE, EVERYDAY NEW PROJECTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS ARE BEING SEEN

We commemorate here one of the key national milestones that have been marked in January around four years ago, Duqm Airport. It is located at the new beating heart of Oman and will be a new thriving gateway to the country. The new airport compliments the series of other local airports, which are planned in different parts of the country. This airport will definitely help nurturing the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, in particular and Al Wusta Governorate in general. It is really a commendable achievement indeed!

Thanks to the government for planning such great projects and appreciation extended to the bodies concerned for making these plans come true and bringing these airports to operation. Of course, Duqm Airport has played a significant role in promoting the economic zone globally as a distinct and perfect tourism and investment destination. Likewise, it facilitated bringing new foreign investments to the country. With the more projects and business opportunities to come up in Duqm, the new airport will serve as a gateway to welcome and attract more local and international developments and businesses to that area. Therefore, all these potential opportunities will support Omanisation by bringing more job openings for nationals.

Outstanding achievements, like this airport, reflect the government’s long-term promising plans and strategies. As His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik said: “We are confident that you all perceive the volume of challenges that we have been through, that we have tackled with tact and patience, and then, with the Almighty’s divine support, proceeded with the implementation of our social and economic plans and programmes, guided by Oman Vision 2040. Our economic and fiscal performance has improved, and we started to accomplish for you and with you the march of growth and prosperity.”

Furthermore, Duqm Airport will contribute in boosting economic diversification and tourism in that part of the country by attracting more visitors and tourists. Duqm has a rich cultural heritage, natural beauty and geographical variety of landmarks. The link between the sea and the desert further strengthens its image as an ideal destination for relaxation and tourism-related investments.

The pathway of development journey is spreading covering every corner of the country. It is now taking to a new route making a stop in the middle of the country. That place will be a new distinguished world-class hub for investment and tourism in the country and one of its kind in the region for its unique characteristics and advantages.



SPREADING AWARENESS

A pedestrian walks past a wall mural depicting health workers wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) suits to spread awareness about the Covid-19 coronavirus in Mumbai on Sunday. – AFP

Despite Covid, it’s home or bust for China holiday travellers

POORNIMA WEERASEKARA AND VIVIAN LIN

The pandemic prevented Shanghai schoolteacher Chen Hainan from returning to her hometown to reunite with family for the past two Lunar New Year holidays, but not even lingering virus concerns and repeated Covid tests will keep her away this time.

Chen, 30, needs to get her nose or throat swabbed a grand total of five times to ensure passage home to eastern Zhejiang province and back.

“I was not planning to go home this year, either. But after thinking how I haven’t been back for two years, I decided this year to go through all the difficulty,” she said, getting ready to depart at Shanghai’s bustling main train station.

Of all the disruptions caused by the pandemic, the inability to return home for New Year has caused perhaps the most widespread heartache in a country that has otherwise kept the virus largely under control.

In normal times, hundreds of millions of people — migrant workers, students, and just about anyone working away from their hometown — pack buses, trains and planes early each year in the world’s largest annual human migration.

Known in Chinese as the “Spring Festival”, the holiday is by far China’s most important, often the only chance each year for workers to see husbands, wives, parents or children.

STRONG REACTION

But the pandemic, which first emerged in the city of Wuhan just as the 2020 travel rush was heating up, blighted that

year’s holiday, and traveller numbers during 2021’s iteration were less than half their usual levels due to persistent Covid anxiety.

This year, Chinese authorities are discouraging travel yet again with China on edge over the Omicron variant, and strict pandemic control measures are in place nationwide to help prevent the February 4-20 Beijing Winter Olympics from becoming a super-spreader event.

Some provincial governments are expressly asking residents to stay put, coastal manufacturing zones are offering migrant factory labourers financial inducements not to travel, and a blizzard of required tests and other measures stand as deterrents.

But not everybody is heeding the message.

With the Year of the Tiger dawning on Tuesday, news reports indicate travel bookings have rebounded this year, and Shanghai’s train station has pulsed with thousands of departing travellers each day last week.

This poses a dilemma for a government that is always wary of potential social unrest in its massive population and has been forced to strike a balance between safety and the pull of home.

At a regular coronavirus briefing by the National Health Commission on Saturday, officials criticised overzealous enforcement of pandemic measures at the local level.

“Some places still do not allow people from low-risk areas to return to their hometowns, forcing them to pay for centralised quarantine,” said Mi Feng, the commission spokesman.

“It is triggering a strong reaction from the public.”

The commission told local authorities not to “arbitrarily prohibit people” from returning home, “so that the masses can spend a healthy, happy and peaceful Spring Festival”.

HOMESICK

But it will be another homesick holiday for many in Beijing.

Due to the Winter Olympics, citizens of the capital face perhaps the highest pressure not to leave, as well as uncertainty over when they will be allowed back into the tightly controlled city.

“We will stay in Beijing during the holidays because we are afraid of being locked out of the city in case of virus cases in our hometown,” said Joanna Feng, an architect originally from Wuhan.

“Of course, grandparents like to see their grandchildren for the New Year, but we will travel after the holidays.”

A spokesperson for leading Chinese travel platform Ctrip said last week that company data indicated that “staycations” and short trips were the most popular booking types this year, a far cry from the mammoth flood of humanity to all points of the country seen in normal years.

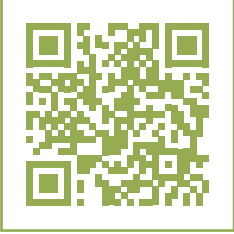
But enough is enough for Huang Jinnan, an 18-year-old factory worker in Shanghai.

He didn’t return home to Henan province last year and doesn’t want to go on another holiday without seeing his beloved grandmother — or risk a trip anywhere else.

“I’m just going back home (because) there’s nowhere else to go.” — AFP



People walk past festive ornaments for sale in the Sham Shui Po area of Hong Kong on Sunday, ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday which ushers in the Year of the Tiger on February 1. – AFP



World Giants celebrate their win after the final of the Howzat Legends League Cricket 2022. – LLC

World Giants clinch inaugural LLC crown

GIANTS BEAT ASIA LIONS BY 25 RUNS IN SUMMIT CLASH

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, JAN 30

World Giants completed their domination by emerging champions of the inaugural Legends League tournament at the Oman Cricket Academy Grounds at Al Amerat on Saturday night.

Former New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson played his best innings in the tournament to smash 94 runs from 43 balls as World Giants posted a tournament-best total of 256 for 5 in 20 overs. Asian Giants made a brave chase of the mammoth total but ended up 25 runs short.

World Giants’ captain Darren Sammy said the group of players gave an entertaining performance without any pressure.

“We enjoyed playing again after some years and our players gave their best without any pressure.”

Sammy said the players enjoyed the beauty of Muscat and hoped to come again. “Muscat was great with its hospitality and vibrant nature. We enjoyed playing at Al Amerat Stadium. It’s a great venue to host such matches.”

Player of the match Anderson said it was nice to click in the final.

“There are a lot of great players in the squad. After some golf practice in Muscat, I thought about swinging my bat a bit and it worked. Happy to play the vital knock in the final.”

Giants’ Morne Morkel became the player of the tournament after



picking up eight wickets in the batting-friendly pitches.

“It was a challenge bowling in these conditions with short boundaries. I tried to mix it up and bowled according to the situation. It was a tremendous experience with the support of my team-mates,” the former South African speedster said.

Asia Lions captain Misbah-

ul-Haq congratulated the World Giants for winning the title.

“Credit to World Giants, they played very well. We tried our best to chase the big total. It was a great atmosphere in Muscat and great to play again in these conditions,” the former Pakistan skipper said.

CONSISTENT KP

Earlier, Misbah won the toss



Corey Anderson of World Giants bats during the final. – LLC



and decided to bowl first. Kevin Pietersen as usual was in good touch and gave a great start to the World Giants with a 22-ball 48 which included two fours and five sixers.

Asia Lions’ Lankan bowler Nuwan Kulasekara struck at the other end when he bowled Phil Mustard (2) and Kevin O’Brien caught by wicketkeeper Upul

Tharanga. Other Lankan bowler Chaminda Vaas put break to the scoring by claiming the wicket of Pietersen.

However, Andersen spoiled the party for Lions with crucial partnerships with Brad Haddin (37), Sammy (38) and Albie Morkel (17) as Giants raced past 200. The partnerships yielded 54 runs from 28 balls, 80 runs

from 33 balls and 57 from 19 respectively.

Asia Lions bowling became very expensive as a result and Kulasekara was among the wickets taking 3-45.

Former express fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar retired hurt after bowling two overs and giving away 33 runs. In reply, Tillakaratne Dilshan (25) and Sanath Jayasuriya (38) gave a decent start for the Asia Lions.

Morne Morkel made the breakthrough with Dilshan’s wicket while his brother Albie Morkel ended Jayasuriya’s innings.

Former England spinner Monty Panesar claimed the wicket of tournament second highest scorer Tharanga (25).

India Maharajas opener and wicketkeeper Naman Ojha emerged the top run getter of the tournament with 259 runs, while Tharanga came second with 248.

Mohammad Yousuf came up with a late fight belting 39 runs from 21 balls but it was not enough.

Albie Morkel claimed 3-35 and Panesar took 2-40 to put regular breaks in the Lions’ chase.

BRIEF SCORES

World Giants 256-5 in 20 overs (Corey Anderson 94 not out (43b, 7x4, 9x6), Kevin Pietersen 48; Nuwan Kulasekara 3-45) beat Asia Lions 231-8 in 20 overs (Mohammad Yousuf 39, Sanath Jayasuriya 38; Albie Morkel 3-35, Monty Panesar 2-40)



Gambia's midfielder Modou Barrow controls the ball during the Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) quarterfinal. – AFP

Hosts Cameroon, Burkina Faso through to AFCON semifinals

DOUALA, Cameroon: Cameroon and Burkina Faso qualified for the semifinals of the Africa Cup of Nations on Saturday with Karl Toko-Ekambi's double leading the hosts to a 2-0 win over Gambia before the Stallions edged Tunisia 1-0 in the late game.

French-born Lyon striker Toko-Ekambi scored twice in the space of eight minutes at the start of the second half in Douala as Cameroon played their first game at the tournament since the deadly crush in Yaounde.

His goals led to ecstatic scenes of celebration and they were just reward for Cameroon, who completely dominated against a Gambian side appearing in their first Cup of Nations.

"We are proud to be in the semi-finals," said Toko-Ekambi and Cameroon march on to a last-four showdown with Egypt or Morocco as they continue their quest for a sixth continental title.

The host nation's first and only visit to the country's economic capital in the tournament meant there was always going to be a frenzied atmosphere in the port city as fans descended on the 50,000-capacity Japoma Stadium.

The Indomitable Lions had not taken to the field since Monday's

French-born Lyon striker Toko-Ekambi scored twice in the space of eight minutes at the start of the second half in Douala as Cameroon played their first game at the tournament since the deadly crush in Yaounde

tragic crush prior to their game against the Comoros in Yaounde which left eight dead and 38 injured.

SECURITY MEASURES

Authorities in Douala massively stepped up their security operation around the ground in an attempt to avoid any repeat.

Army officers with rifles stood atop buildings lining the route to the stadium while vast numbers of police patrolled the streets and watched over entrances.

On the eve of the game Cameroon's sports minister announced a raft of measures aimed at avoiding a repeat of the Olembe disaster.

Those included stopping the distribution of free tickets and banning children under 11 from attending games.

The minister also urged supporters to arrive earlier, and

the gates at Japoma opened five hours prior to kick-off.

That meant the deafening noise of vuvuzelas filled the air well before the Cameroon team arrived, dancing their way from the bus to the changing room, and only stopped momentarily for the silence in memory of the crush victims.

Coronavirus restrictions put in place for the AFCON have limited crowds to a maximum of 60 percent of capacity but that is raised to 80 per cent when the host nation play, and the official attendance was 36,259.

The opening goal arrived five minutes into the second half as right-back Collins Fai crossed and Toko-Ekambi headed into the far corner.

Out came the vuvuzelas, and the crowd were on their feet again on 57 minutes as the impressive

Martin Hongla sent a low ball across goal for Toko-Ekambi to finish emphatically for his fifth goal at this AFCON.

Captain Vincent Aboubakar, with six, is the only player with more and together they have scored all of Cameroon's goals.

'Emotional' Pending confirmation from the Confederation of African Football, Cameroon are now due to return to Olembe for their semi-final on Thursday.

In Garoua in the north of the country, Dango Ouattara scored the only goal of the game on the stroke of half-time as Burkina Faso edged Tunisia to set up a semi-final against either Senegal or Equatorial Guinea.

Ouattara, just 19, then turned villain eight minutes from time when a yellow card for elbowing Ali Maaloul was changed to a red after the referee from Botswana checked the touchline VAR monitor.

Success for Burkina Faso came just five days after the landlocked west African country was plunged into political uncertainty when President Roch Marc Christian Kabore was ousted in a military coup.

— AFP

England miss record target against Australia in thrilling Ashes draw

CANBERRA: England fell agonisingly short of a record target in Test cricket after Australia staged a remarkable fightback to draw the one-off women's Ashes Test at Canberra's Manuka Oval on Sunday and take a 6-4 lead in the multi-format series.

Set 257 to win in 48 overs, the visitors had looked on their way to a famous victory on the back of a devastating 52-run stand between Natalie Sciver (58) and Sophia Dunkley (45) before late strikes from Australia meant they finished on 245-9.

The chase would have needed them to beat the previous best of 198 set by Australia more than a decade ago.

On a final day that had its share of twists, England lost six wickets for 27 runs after Annabel Sutherland (3-69) and Alana King (2-39) turned the match in Australia's favour with half an hour to go.

"Brilliant test match and I thoroughly enjoyed it," said England captain Heather Knight, who was named player of the match for her knocks of 168 not out and 48. "I don't think it deserves a draw in the end, does it? But delighted the way the girls



fought and it is really pleasing."

Australia earlier declared on 216-7 after resuming day four on 12-2, with Beth Mooney top-scoring with 63 and Ellyse Perry (41) and Ashleigh Gardner (38) making crucial contributions.

Australian skipper Meg Lanning said: "I still didn't know what happened in the last hour. We declared wanting to take those 10 wickets. Obviously, England batted really well but proud of the way we got back into the game taking wickets."

The two sides next play a three-match one-day international series, which starts in Canberra on Thursday. England need to win all three games to regain the Ashes. — Reuters

Moeen helps England level T20 series against Windies

BRIDGETOWN: England stand-in skipper Moeen Ali smashed a blistering half-century and picked up two key wickets in the West Indies chase as his side squared the five-match Twenty20 series at 2-2 with a 34-run victory in the fourth game in Bridgetown on Saturday.

Moeen (63), who was filling in for the injured Eoin Morgan, powered England to 193-6 on a slowish wicket at the Kensington Oval after some fine early work from Jason Roy (52) and James Vince (34).

The left-hander was particularly severe on Jason Holder (3-44), hitting the seamer for four consecutive sixes in the 18th over as he raced to his fifty in 23 balls.

"We started well at the top and finished really well. This is exactly what we want — to put the bowlers under pressure... I went from not being able to hit the ball and then a couple of shots, you get the momentum and you keep going," said Moeen.

Brandon King (26) and Kyle Mayers (40) gave the hosts a fast



Moeen Ali, of England, hits 6 during the 4th T20I between West Indies and England at Kensington Oval, Bridgetown. — AFP

start but the Windies momentum was halted by Moeen (2-28), who removed both openers before a wicket apiece for fellow spinners Adil Rashid (1-28) and Liam Livingstone (1-18) helped England home. — Reuters

Aflag Group, Royal Gulf and Team Coorg secure victories

MUSCAT: Farrukh Jamal struck a vital 48 to steer Aflag Group to an exciting 6-wicket victory against Mazoon Dairy Company in an E Division T20 League match at Muscat Municipality ground 3 in Al Amerat on Friday.

Invited to bat first, Mazoon Dairy posted 149 for 8 on the board thanks to Kjalid Mazhoor's 35 and Yusuf Patanwala's 30. Arnold Lewis, Ahmed Mohammed and Tahir Abbas all took two wickets each.

Farrukh Jamal and Haris Alam (34) led the way with solid knocks as Mazoon

Dairy secured victory in the 19th over, scoring 152 for 4. Ameer Hussain bagged 2 for 29.

Brief Scores (E Division): Mazoon Dairy Company 149 for 8 in 20 overs (Khalid Mazhoor 35 – 3x4, 1x6, Yusuf Patanwala 30 – 2x4, Arnold Lewis 2-16, Ahmed Mohammed 2-32, Tahir Abbas 2-31) lost to Aflag Group Ct 152 for 4 in 18.3 overs (Farrukh Jamal 48 – 7x4, Haris Alam 34 – 4x4, 1x6, Ameer Hussain 2-29) by 6 wickets.

Jebin bowls Royal Gulf to victory

Jebin James picked up 3 for 16 to help

Royal Gulf beat OCT Al Hail B in a low-scoring F Division match at OAC 3 ground in Al Seeb.

Royal Gulf failed to put a big total on the board, getting dismissed for 100 in 14.1 overs due to brilliant bowling by Asim Abdul (3 for 15) and Khalid Rahim (3 for 27). Amal Raj (36) and Alif Hameed (25) were their notable scorers.

OCT Al Hail B failed to rise to the occasion, folding up for a disappointing 64 in 13.4 overs due to superb spells by Jebin, Alif Hameed (2 for 2) and Sameer (2 for

12). **Brief Scores (F Division):** Royal Gulf 100 all out in 14.1 overs (Amal Raj 36 – 2x4, 2x6, Alif Hameed 25 – 4x4, Asim Abdul 3-15, Khalid Rahim 3-27) beat Oct Al Hail 'B' 64 all out in 13.4 overs (Zulfikar Habibullah 17 – 2x4, Jebin James 3-16, Sameer Hameed 2-12, Alif Hameed 2-2) by 36 runs.

Prayag stars in TCM win

In another F Division match, Prayag Bolli's excellent spell of 4 for 17 and Poonacha Pattada's 46 off 25 powered Team Coorg Muscat (TCM) to a thumping

7-wicket win over FFC Oman.

FFC Oman was bowled out for a lowly 104 in 19.3 overs as Prayag Bolli and Milind Bhujwala ran through the side with their brilliant bowling.

TCM raced to the target in only 9.2 overs thanks to Poonacha Pattada's top knock. Shamil Riaz claimed 2 for 12.

Brief Scores (F Division): FFC Oman 104 all out in 19.3 overs (Syed Azhar 20 – 2x4, Prayag Bolli 4-17, Milind Bhujwala 2-12) lost to Team Coorg Muscat (TCM) 106 for 3 in 9.2 overs (Poonacha Pattada 46 – 7x4, Shamil Riaz 2-11) by 7 wickets.

NADAL CREATES HISTORY

WITH

21ST

GRAND SLAM



Australian Open

Men's singles champions



2022	Rafael Nadal	ESP
2021	Novak Djokovic	SRB
2020	Novak Djokovic	SRB
2019	Novak Djokovic	SRB
2018	Roger Federer	SUI
2017	Roger Federer	SUI
2016	Novak Djokovic	SRB
2015	Novak Djokovic	SRB
2014	Stan Wawrinka	SUI
2013	Novak Djokovic	SRB

AFP

MELBOURNE: Rafael Nadal roared back from two sets down to win a titanic five-set duel with Daniil Medvedev and claim a record 21st Grand Slam men's title in the Australian Open final on Sunday.

The Spanish great looked dead and buried as the Russian world number two carved out a two-set lead but Nadal surged home for one of his mightiest comeback wins 2-6, 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 6-4, 6-4 in 5hr 24min on Rod Laver Arena.

Nadal came out on top in the physical war of attrition to move ahead of era rivals Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer on the all-time list of men's major winners.

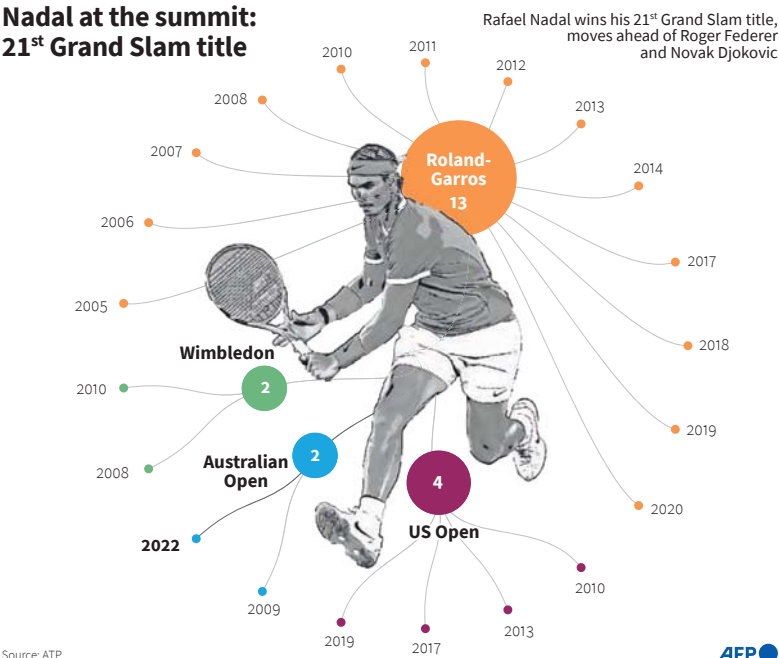
Djokovic missed his chance to improve on his nine Australian Open wins when he was deported over vaccination issues on the eve of the tournament, while Federer is injured.

It was one of the 35-year-old Spanish warrior's greatest title victories in his 29th Grand Slam final winning his second Australian Open, 13 years after his first in 2009.

Nadal also became only the fourth man to win each of the four Grand Slams twice and the third oldest man in the Open Era to win a Grand Slam title, behind Ken Rosewall and Federer.

The final went down to the bitter end with Nadal being broken as he

Nadal at the summit: 21st Grand Slam title



served for the championship only for the Spaniard to break back.

On his second attempt to serve it out, Nadal powered to three match points to win amid chaotic scenes in his player's box and the frenzied crowd.

It is the fourth time in his storied career that Nadal had clawed back to win from two sets down and the second time Nadal had denied Medvedev in a Grand Slam final, winning a five-set epic at the 2019 US Open.

It crowned an extraordinary effort from Nadal at the year's opening major, having to modify his game to compensate for a degenerative bone disease in his left foot that ended his 2021

season last August.

He then caught Covid in December which, he said, made him "very sick".

Medvedev had wrecked Djokovic's calendar Grand Slam push and bid for a 21st title in New York four months ago and was aiming to do the same to Nadal in Melbourne.

Medvedev lost his second consecutive Australian Open final after falling in straight sets to Djokovic in last year's final.

Nadal now leads Medvedev 4-1, with the Russian also losing to the Spanish lefty in his first major final at the 2019 US Open over five sets.

business

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE
4,151.824



Follow us on
omanobserver.om/business

Ladies Banking Services

A Banking world tailor-made for you

Priority to serve in select branches

Customized debit card with a host of benefits

Customized Visa Classic credit cards with exclusive offers and benefits

Children's Long Term Deposit Education Plan linked to your account

Attractive car insurance rates

For more information:
<https://bit.ly/BankdhofarEng>

Ladies Banking Services

بنك دُحُفَر

Bank Dhofar

the best bank for you

2479 1111

www.bankdhofar.com

Green Energy Oman to unlock huge ICV, job prospects

HUGE SPINOFFS: Localisation potential spans upstream, midstream and downstream segments of mammoth green hydrogen scheme

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

An Omani mega green hydrogen project, currently ranked among the world's largest giga-scale green energy schemes, has the potential to unleash a wealth of localisation opportunities across all aspects of the hydrogen value chain.

An international consortium comprising OQ — the integrated energy group of the Sultanate of Oman, Intercontinental Energy

At full capacity, the mammoth scheme will be powered by 25 gigawatts (GW) of solar and wind generation capacity, to enable the production of 1.8 million tonnes per annum of green hydrogen and 10 million tonnes of green ammonia

(ICE) based in Hong Kong, and Enertech of Kuwait is behind the proposed development of world-scale Green Energy Oman (GEO) in Al Wusta Governorate.

At full capacity, the mammoth scheme will be powered by 25

gigawatts (GW) of solar and wind generation capacity, to enable the production of 1.8 million tonnes p.a. of green hydrogen and 10 million tonnes of green ammonia.

According to a key project official, the project's phased development — envisioned over a period of 10 years — has the potential to spawn significant In-Country Value (ICV) opportunities, as well as employment generation.

“The GEO project has a significant ICV component due to the protracted phasing of construction, which allows for the development of both local know-how and supply chains”, said Ahmed al Rawas, Project Manager at OQ's Alternative Energy unit.

TURN TO PAGE 15

Al Kawthar Islamic Shariah Compliant Fund

"Value added exposure to GCC Markets"

Board of Director Report For the Year ended December 31st, 2021.

Dear Unitholders,

On behalf of the board, I am pleased to present the results of Al Kawthar Fund (Shariah Compliant) for the year ended December 31st, 2021.

For the Year ended 31st December 2021, the fund continued its uptrend performance and posted 27.3%. Moreover, the fund has given an annualized 3-year return of 13.03%. The fund value at the end of the period was RO. 6.52mn and the Net Asset Value per unit stood at RO 1.205. The fund had paid 10% cash dividend during the year.

Fund Performance

Period	Al Kawthar
Full Year 2021	27.32%
Full Year 2020	5.49%
Full Year 2019	7.62%
Last 3 Years Annualized	13.03%
Last 5 Years Annualized	8.78%

Global equity markets showed strong gains during the year despite the increase in daily cases of the Omicron variant in the second half of 2021. The new variant, although spreads fast, is less deadlier and leads to relatively lower hospitalizations which helped investors sentiments during that period.

GCC markets ended the year 2021 with positive notes on the back of higher oil prices, strong corporate profitability and new IPO listings in Saudi and Abu Dhabi. Oil prices witnessed volatility during the year as it hit a low of USD 65 and closed the year at USD77.8 per barrel.

Abu Dhabi's market was the top performer GCC with 68.2% gains followed by Saudi and Dubai markets which reported a gain of 29.8% and 28.2% respectively. Kuwait All Shares gained 27.0% during 2021 while Bahrain market posted 20.6% gains. Oman and Qatar ended the year with gain of 12.9% and 11.4% to end a very positive year for the GCC region.

Statement of financial position as at 31 December 2021

	31 December 2021 RO	31 December 2020 RO
ASSETS		
Current assets		
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	6,064,160	5,558,036
Receivables	310,794	10,047
Cash and cash equivalents	391,954	75,596
Total assets	6,766,908	5,643,679
UNITHOLDERS' FUNDS		
Fund capital	5,408,300	5,399,527
Retained earnings	1,106,885	182,112
Total Unitholders' funds	6,515,185	5,581,639
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities		
Accruals and other payables	35,208	30,886
Due to a related party	216,515	31,154
Total liabilities	251,723	62,040
TOTAL UNITHOLDERS' FUNDS AND LIABILITIES	6,766,908	5,643,679
Net asset value per unit	1.205	1.034

Brief Summary of Accounts

Particulars	12 Months 31 DEC 2021 RO	12 Months 31 DEC 2020 RO
Revenues	1,821,312	430,385
Total Comprehensive Income	1,463,824	279,963
Net Asset Value	6,515,185	5,581,639
Fund Capital	5,408,300	5,399,527
NAV per unit	1.205	1.034

Outlook

The GCC market outlook remains challenging in the coming year. The expected oil prices volatility and interest rate hike in future would determine the direction of the markets in 2022. The preparation and infrastructure development for FIFA World cup 2022 is expected to boost the Qatar economic activity next year. The upcoming listing IPOs may continue to help passive inflows into the markets. We remain cautiously optimistic for the year 2022.

The fund's investment strategy continues to build a fundamentally strong portfolio with sustainable growth and dividend yield. The active approach aims to maximize returns and protect the portfolio from downside risks in the event of a market correction.

On behalf of the members of the Board of Directors, I would like to acknowledge His Majesty, Haitham Bin Tariq, for his inspiring leadership and vision that will continue to lead us further on the path to greater prosperity and thank our valued unit holders for their continued support.

Rawan Ahmed Al Said

Chairperson

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 31 December 2021

	Year ended 31 December 2021 RO	Year ended 31 December 2020 RO
INCOME		
Dividend income from financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	183,471	136,826
Realised gain on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	885,194	48,676
Unrealised gain on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	743,746	245,879
Foreign exchange gain / (loss)	4,651	(996)
Profit from Sukuk	4,250	-
	1,821,312	430,385
EXPENSES		
Management, performance, custodian and fund administration fees	(299,804)	(102,380)
General and administrative expenses	(57,684)	(48,042)
	(357,488)	(150,422)
Net profit for the year	1,463,824	279,963
Earnings per unit	0.271	0.052

TATHMEER

TANMIA GCC Diversified Equity Fund (TATHMEER)

Board of Directors Report For the Year ended December 31, 2021.

Dear Unitholders,

On behalf of the board, I am pleased to present the report for the year ended 31st December 2021 of TANMIA GCC Diversified Equity Fund (TATHMEER).

For the year ended 31st December 2021, the Fund has continued its series of positive returns and gained 32.90%. The consistency is observed over the long term with an annualized 3 years returns of 15.10%. The Fund value in USD stood at 23.83mn and the Net Asset Value per unit stood at USD 1.29. The fund distributed cash dividends of 11% during the year.

Performance

Period	TANMIA GCC Fund
Full Year 2021	32.90%
Full Year 2020	2.56%
Full Year 2019	11.87%
Last 3 Years Annualized	15.10%
Last 5 Years Annualized	11.51%

Global equity markets reported positive performances despite the emergence of the Omicron variant that sparked fears of renewed cases and hospitalization. However, vaccinations have proven to be effective which helped investors sentiments. Oil prices have traded in a volatile range, hitting lows of USD 65 before stabilizing above USD 75 towards the end of the year.

GCC markets capitalized on the strong rally of oil prices, the improved corporate profitability, and the efforts of listing new stocks. Abu Dhabi topped the GCC markets with a 68.2% gain, followed by Saudi and Dubai, which were also strong and reported gains of 29.8% and 28.2% respectively. Kuwait All Shares gained momentum and ended the year up 27.0%, while Bahrain reported a 20.6% gain. Oman and Qatar ended the year with returns of 12.9% and 11.4% to close a positive year for the region.

Statement of financial position as at 31 December 2021

	31 December 2021 US\$	31 December 2020 US\$
ASSETS		
Current assets		
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	21,349,666	21,294,781
Receivables	2,058,167	491,976
Cash and cash equivalents	672,157	1,276,114
Total assets	24,079,990	23,062,871
UNITHOLDERS' FUNDS		
Fund capital	18,476,036	21,420,644
	5,351,199	1,406,829
Total Unitholders' funds	23,827,235	22,827,473
LIABILITIES		
Current liabilities		
Accruals and other payables	144,129	140,437
Amount due to a related party	108,626	94,961
Total liabilities	252,755	235,398
Total unitholders' funds and liabilities	24,079,990	23,062,871
Net asset value per unit	1.29	1.07

Brief Summary of Accounts

Particulars	For the 12 Months ended 31 Dec 2021 (USD)	For the 12 Months ended 31 Dec 2020 (USD)
Revenue for the period	7,424,338	923,763
Total Comprehensive income/(loss) for the period	6,833,349	444,112
Net Asset Value	23,827,235	22,827,473
Fund Capital	18,476,036	21,420,644
Net Asset Value per unit	1.29	1.07

Outlook

The outlook for regional markets remains challenging as stretched valuations and oil price volatility can weigh in on market movements. IPO listings and government intervention to support their respective markets is expected to boost performances. Anticipation of the FIFA 2022 World Cup remains high both for Qatar's market and the area. Therefore, we maintain a cautiously positive view on the markets and believe that our approach and strategy of stock picking and portfolio management shall ensure steady and positive returns over the medium to long term.

On behalf of the members of the Board of Directors, I would like to acknowledge and thank His Majesty, Haitham Bin Tariq, for his inspiring leadership and vision that will continue to lead us further on the path to greater prosperity and our valued unit holders for their continued support.

Rawan Ahmed Al Said

Chairperson

Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the year ended 31 December 2021

	Year ended 31 December 2021 US\$	Year ended 31 December 2020 US\$
INCOME		
Dividend income on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	646,837	622,915
Realised gain/(loss) on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	4,253,414	(322,216)
Unrealised gain on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	2,568,874	671,586
Foreign exchange loss	(46,075)	(51,680)
Finance income	1,288	3,158
	7,424,338	923,763
EXPENSES		
Redemption gain/(loss)	(427,121)	(365,867)
General and administrative expenses	(163,868)	(113,784)
	(590,989)	(479,651)
Profit for the year	6,833,349	444,112
Earnings per unit	0.34	0.02

Managed By:
Oman National Investment Development Company SAOC
P.O.Box 3028, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman, Tel +968 22 300 400 Fax +968 22 300 420
www.tanmia.om

تنمية
TANMIA
الشركة العامة للتنمية والاستثمارات الوطنية
Oman National Investments Development Company

Managed By:
Oman National Investment Development Company SAOC
P.O.Box 3028, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman, Tel +968 22 300 400 Fax +968 22 300 420
www.tanmia.om

تنمية
TANMIA
الشركة العامة للتنمية والاستثمارات الوطنية
Oman National Investments Development Company

NBO hosts Indian ambassador

MUSCAT: Continuing to pave the way for international relations, National Bank of Oman (NBO) hosted His Excellency Amit Narang, the Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, at its headquarters in Al Athaiba.

Meeting with the bank's Chief Executive Officer, Abdullah al Hinai, and other members of senior management, the Ambassador addressed NBO's Indian employees, noting their valuable contributions to the bank, as well as discussing India-Oman bilateral relations and the wealth of opportunities for Indian businesses in Oman.

His Excellency Amit Narang commented, "Our nation's long-



standing and friendly relationship with Oman has opened up many

new opportunities for both sides. It was a pleasure to visit NBO as

we explore the possibilities for further cooperation in the banking sector in particular for the Indian diaspora, as well as businesspeople from India who are interested to make investments in Oman."

Abdullah al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer at NBO, added, "We continue to work closely with all communities to ensure that they can manage their finances seamlessly, regardless of whether they are banking in Oman or anywhere in the world. We welcomed His Excellency's visit as part of our impetus to Oman's efforts to foster and promote bilateral trade and development, for which the banking industry plays a major role."

ahlibank concludes 2021 Wafra prize draws



MUSCAT: Endorsing its efforts towards rewarding its savings accounts customers, and supporting them in achieving their ambitions, ahlibank has conducted the last draws of its popular Wafra prize scheme that has helped in improving the lives of several individuals.

In a live streamed event on the bank's official social media pages, the names of 20 winners were announced who won across various categories with more than RO 300,000, including one winner of the RO 250,000 'Salary for Life' grand prize (RO 1,000 per month for 250 months).

At the beginning of the year, ahlibank revealed that 2021 Wafra prize scheme was designed to reward more winners with prizes totalling more than RO2 million, across its branch network in the Sultanate of Oman.

Expressing his pleasure over the success achieved by the prize scheme in its last edition, Muneer al Balushi, AGM — Head of Retail Distribution at ahlibank, acknowledged, "We are delighted with the success achieved by Wafra scheme since its launch. It has played an active role in promoting the culture of saving in the community and ensuring financial stability among our customers. The programme was designed to feature a variety of prize categories. On behalf of the

bank, I am pleased to congratulate all the winners of our 2021 draws, wishing them a better future for themselves and their families."

"Wafra prize draws were a strategic approach towards inculcating a habit of savings amongst the people of Oman. Moving forward, we will continue to assess the needs of the local market, aligning them with the objectives of our strategy and giving our customers more reasons to bank with us, and more importantly save with us for their better, brighter future. Our innovative product portfolio and services confirm our commitment to delivering a banking experience that exceeds the expectations of our loyal customers," Al Balushi added.

Bank Muscat signs agreement with the Office of the Wali of Bidbid

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, as part of its social responsibility and commitment to national growth and development, has signed an agreement with the Office of the Wali of Bidbid to provide kiosks for the welfare of social welfare families and job seekers.

These kiosks will be distributed in different places within the Wilayat of Bidbid. The agreement was signed by HE Dr Humood bin Ali bin Humaid al Marshodi, Wali of Bidbid, and Hamza bin Abbas al

Ajmi, Deputy General Manager — Credit, Bank Muscat.

Speaking on this occasion, HE Dr Humood bin Ali bin Humaid al Marshodi, Wali of Bidbid, said: "This agreement is being implemented in cooperation between the Wali's Office and Bank Muscat as part of the strong public-private partnership in supporting development projects. It aims to support jobseekers and social welfare families in Bidbid to contribute towards the Sultanate of Oman's economy through small businesses. We extend our sincere



thanks to Bank Muscat, which is well known for its pioneering CSR activities, for its support for this project and hope that the private sector will continue to support projects that contributes to national development and our community."

Hamza bin Abbas al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager — Credit, Bank Muscat, said: "Bank Muscat has been a proud partner in the development of the Sultanate of Oman and our community over the past 40 years. Through this initiative with the support of the

Office of His Excellency the Wali of Bidbid, we hope to benefit many social welfare families and job seekers in the wilayat. The kiosks, which are being built by an SME (Smart Industrious Co), will enable many citizens to play a greater role in enhancing their income through starting their own business.

We are delighted to be part of a strong Public-Private Partnership in Oman, which is creating a strong and positive impact on Omani society across multiple fields including the development of a vibrant MSME sector."

Sohar International awarded Fastest Growing Commercial Bank – Oman 2021

MUSCAT: With financial indicators testifying the bank's exemplary performance in the fiscal year 2021, Sohar International has been awarded the "Fastest Growing Commercial Bank — Oman 2021" by the UK-based Global Economics, recognising the bank's stellar leadership and overall growth.

Ahmed al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, said: "With a vision of becoming a world-leading Omani service company that helps customers, communities and people to prosper and grow, this award stands as a testament to the successful implementation of our agile growth strategy set forth 3 years ago.

Despite global economic challenges, we have navigated rough waters and have managed to organically grow our asset base positioning Sohar International as one of the top three banks locally in a relatively short span of time.

The healthy and consistent growth experienced has been on the back of innovating thinking, actively seeking out new opportunities, and ensuring that we always fulfil our purpose of helping people win whilst



delivering banking for their ever-changing world. Such growth does not only contribute to the bottom-lines, but also — more importantly — positions us to contribute towards our communities, as well as play an active and complimentary role towards enhancing the socioeconomic scene within the country aligning us with Oman Vision 2040."

A'Saffa Foods wins Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards

MUSCAT: A'Saffa Foods SAOG was recently presented with the 'Oman's Most Trusted Brand' award in the 'Poultry Products' category at the 2021 edition of the renowned Award Ceremony. Every year, Apex Media presents Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards to the most trusted brands in the country as a validation of consumer trust. The 2021 Oman's Most Trusted Brand Awards Ceremony was held at Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz-Carlton Hotel, on January 25, under the auspices of Dr Mohammed al Rumhy, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

Receiving the award at the event on behalf of A'Saffa Foods



was the company's CEO, Eng Mohamed bin Suhail al Shanfari. On receiving the award, Eng Mohamed bin Suhail al Shanfari said, "The essence of trust is delivering on your promises, something that has become

increasingly critical in today's uncertain market. This is why with every passing year we continue to do our very best to live up to our promises of providing our customers with nothing but the finest poultry products."

Fitch revises Mazoon Electricity's outlook to stable

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JAN 30

International ratings agency Fitch Ratings has revised Omani power distribution and supply utility Mazoon Electricity Company SAOC's Outlook to Stable from Negative, while affirming the company's Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'BB-'. The action follows a recent similar action on the Sultanate of Oman's Outlook.

Mazoon Electricity Company SAOC (MZEC), a subsidiary of Nama Group, undertakes regulated distribution and supply of electricity in Al Dakhiliyah, South



Al Sharqiyah, North Al Sharqiyah, South Al Batinah governorates as well as Al Suwaiq in North Al Batinah Governorate under a licence issued by the Authority of Public Services Regulation.

"Mazoon's ratings are constrained by the sovereign ratings, reflecting our view of their strong links. The company's credit profile reflects Mazoon's stable profitability, with a significant share of EBITDA from regulated electricity distribution, as well as expected negative free cash flow (FCF) over the next four years, due to significant capex and higher dividends. We forecast metrics to remain commensurate with the

ratings," said Fitch in its outlook statement.

Last week, Oman Investment Authority (OIA) — the parent organisation of Nama Group — announcing the start of a landmark restructuring exercise that will culminate in the merger of merger of four electricity distribution and supply utilities: Muscat Electricity Distribution Company, Mazoon Electricity Company, Majan Electricity Company and Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer).

The move is designed to optimise efficiency and eliminate duplication and waste in this key sector.

CBO, CBFS ink pact to support fintech training



BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JAN 30

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) signed a cooperation agreement with the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS) on Thursday, January 27, 2022, at CBO's Headquarters. The cooperation agreement was signed by Tahir bin Salim al Amri, CBO's Executive President, and Dr Zahran bin Salim al Salti, CBFS Dean.

Under this agreement, CBO and CBFS will join hands to develop and introduce a Professional Diploma in Financial Technology (Fintech) as part of the college's curricula. This new Diploma will mainly

focus on financial technology and its applications in the banking and financial sectors.

This agreement aims at promoting and spreading awareness of the banking and financial system in the Sultanate of Oman, as the new technological developments and innovations are disrupting the way of doing banking businesses and, subsequently, creating new banking and financial services and products.

The agreement will also explore the appropriate mechanisms to develop the knowledge, skills and abilities of the human capabilities in the banking and financial sectors in the Sultanate of Oman.

Sweets of Oman dismisses board member on fraud suspicion

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JAN 30

The Board of Directors of Sweets of Oman SAOG, a Rusayl-based confectionery maker listed on the Muscat Securities Exchange (MSX), announced on Sunday that it has dismissed a board member on "criminal suspicion" of involvement in an alleged case of financial fraud uncovered last year.

The announcement follows an emergency meeting convened by the Board last week to review the findings of a legal expert commissioned by the company to look into the suspected theft of funds.

In a filing to the Capital Market Authority (CMA) last October, Sweets of Oman said it had lodged a criminal case against a number of managers in connection with a fraud uncovered by the company in its accounts. It noted that, following an independent review of its accounts, a "misstatement" of its financial statements had been discovered, leading to a significant increase in its accumulated losses.

It said the misstatement occurred in the financial



It noted that, following an independent review of its accounts, a "misstatement" of its financial statements had been discovered, leading to a significant increase in its accumulated losses

statements for the years 2017, 2018, 2019 and until June 30, 2020, representing the second quarter of the financial year ended on December 31, 2020.

Following the uncovering of the misstatement, four senior

executives — the General Manager, Finance Manager, Assistant Finance Manager, Purchase Manager and Information Technology Manager — were suspended and eventually dismissed. A criminal case was also instituted against them with the Economic Crimes section, it said.

"As the financial impact resulting from the above mentioned misstatements, the company incurred a huge loss of amounts which were disclosed previously in this regard. As such, the business of the company is duly affected as a result of these financial losses incurred by the company", the Chairman had added.

Green Energy Oman to unlock huge ICV, job prospects

FROM PAGE 13

"Additionally, it will expose many Omani businesses to new industries, bringing experience in wind and solar and adding to the current experience to the Oman business environment in the midstream and downstream sections."

Presenting during an industry event held in Muscat recently, Al Rawas noted that GEO's immense scale and long operational life, spanning in excess of 50 years, would unlock a wide array of localisation opportunities far above current norms.

These span the upstream, midstream and downstream segments of the green hydrogen value chain, he said.

With vast fields of solar and wind farms necessary to generate the required clean energy for the electrolysis process, the potential for local manufacturing of equipment and parts is significant, said Al Rawas.

"Some of the new facilities that will be built here will open up employment opportunities for the local communities in the upstream (wind turbines and solar system), midstream (electrolysers, piping and power distribution), and downstream (in processing of equipment and assembly).

Also, from the scale of the GEO project, there is opportunity for onshore manufacturing processes; it will encourage (international) manufacturers to move their facilities to Oman and thereby reach other customers in Oman and the region", he stated.

Also promising is the localisation potential around solar and wind farm installation, operation and maintenance, the manufacture and maintenance of electrolysers and R&D across the value chain, he added.

A Final Investment Decision (FID), slated sometime in early 2026, will pave the way for construction work on Green Energy Oman to commence in 2027.

OPAZ launches express service for processing of investor residency requests

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JAN 30

In an effort to encourage investment and to achieve the economic diversification objectives of the Sultanate of Oman, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) launched the Quick Masar service for processing the residency requests of investors in the special economic zones and free zones.

The new service, available through the One-Stop Shop system with an easy procedure, will enable the issuance of the investment licence on the same day.

OPAZ has recently begun issuing long-term residency visas for a period of up to 5 to 10 years to foreign investors interested in residing in SEZs and free zones.



Priority is given to individuals making significant value-added investments that contribute towards job creation for Omanis and opportunities for small businesses.

Dr Said bin Khalifa al Turashi, head of the Commercial

Registration & Business Services Department of OPAZ, explained that the new service enables investors registered in the special economic zones and free zones to apply for a residence visa immediately upon registration of their new business with the

authority's commercial registry through the One-Stop Shop.

He noted that OPAZ has been working with the Royal Omani Police, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the Ministry of

Labour, to provide optimum services in the field of long-term residency.

The visa allows investors, who meet certain conditions, to obtain residency visas that enable them to work and live in the areas affiliated with the OPAZ.

Following the issuance of Royal Decree 105/2020, the Authority has worked to strengthen its role in the business services aspect by providing fast and efficient services through the One-Stop shop, whose electronic services cover all SEZs and free zones.

The authority has also completed a number of studies directed towards the development of the investment business environment which include efforts to streamline procedures and review certain fees.

Start-ups bringing Pakistan’s farming into digital age

YANN SCHREIBER

Agriculture entrepreneurs are bringing the digital age to Pakistan’s farmers, helping them plan crops better and distribute their produce when the time is right.

Until recently, “the most modern machine we had was the tractor”, Aamer Hayat Bhandara, a farmer and local councillor behind one such project said in “Chak 26”, a village in the agricultural heartland of Punjab province.

Even making mobile phone calls can be difficult in many parts of Pakistan, but since October, farmers in Chak 26 and pilot projects elsewhere have been given free access to the Internet — and it is revolutionising the way they work.

Agriculture is the mainstay of Pakistan’s economy, accounting for nearly 20 per cent of gross domestic product and around 40 per cent of the workforce.

It is estimated to be the world’s fifth-largest producer of sugarcane, seventh-largest of wheat and tenth-biggest rice grower — but it mostly relies on human labour and lags other big farming nations on mechanisation.

Cows and donkeys rest near a muddy road leading to a pavilion in Chak 26, which is connected to a network via a small satellite dish.

This is the “Digital Dera” — or meeting place — and six local farmers have come to see the computers and tablets that provide accurate weather forecasts, as well as the latest market prices and farming tips.

Communal Internet access is not Bhandara’s only innovation.

A short drive away, on the wall of a shed, a modern electronic switch system is linked to an old water pump.

A tablet is now all he needs to control the irrigation on part of the 100 hectares (250 acres) he cultivates — although it is still subject to the vagaries of Pakistan’s intermittent power supply.

This year, Bhandara hopes, others will install the technology he says will reduce water consumption and labour.

Foreign investment in Pakistan start-ups exceeded \$310 million last year — five times the 2020 level and more than the previous six years combined, according to several reports. — AFP

Agriculture is the mainstay of Pakistan’s economy, accounting for nearly 20 per cent of gross domestic product and around 40 per cent of the workforce



MASKED PICKER

A coffee picker, wearing a face mask for protection against the Covid-19, picks coffee beans at La Hammonia, Selva Negra coffee farm in Matagalpa, Nicaragua. Protected by masks and keeping their distance, hundreds of coffee pickers carefully pick the golden beans in the plantations of northern Nicaragua, an agricultural country struggling to keep its economy going in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. — AFP

Europe inflation is not US inflation



JEAN PISANI-FERRY

The writer, a senior fellow at Brussels-based think-tank Bruegel and a senior non-resident fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, holds the Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa chair at the European University Institute

CONTRARY TO THE WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT INFLATION IS BACK FOR GOOD ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC, THE OUTLOOK FOR THE US IS FUNDAMENTALLY WORSE, FOR THREE REASONS

Eurozone consumer prices increased by 5 per cent year on year in December 2021, while the number of Google searches for “inflation” has recently risen three-fold in Germany and ten-fold in France.

So, at first glance, it is difficult to avoid the impression that Europe — like the United States, where annual price growth has hit 7 per cent — will have a tough time taming the inflation dragon.

Both the Fed and the ECB can certainly be blamed for not having spotted the current price surge early enough. But that is no reason to lump together the US and the eurozone.

Contrary to the widespread belief that inflation is back for good on both sides of the Atlantic, the outlook for the US is fundamentally worse, for three reasons.

First, under former president Donald Trump and his successor, Joe Biden, the US tackled the fallout from the Covid-19 shock with a massive fiscal stimulus.

From March 2020 to September 2021, money transferred to households and businesses in the US through exceptional tax cuts, top-ups to unemployment benefits, debt forgiveness, and other schemes amounted to a whopping \$2.5 trillion, or more than 11 per cent of pre-crisis GDP.

True, part of this money substituted for

the lack of strong, built-in shock absorbers of the sort that have long been common in Europe. Extra unemployment benefits, for example, were made necessary by the limited generosity and short duration of the standard payments.

Europe, meanwhile, was paradoxically more generous and thrifter at the same time. When French President Emmanuel Macron announced in March 2020 the launch of a massive furlough scheme whereby the government would pick up the wage bill of employees idled by the pandemic, he said loud and clear that the state would fulfil its responsibility to protect, “whatever the cost.”

Not everyone in Europe said the same, but virtually all governments adopted the same position. For a while, there was no budget constraint anymore, and the ECB stood by to help governments do their job.

The second factor is that furloughed workers in Europe retained their labour contracts and the associated employment security. True, temporary workers and those on fixed-term contracts paid a high price as a result of the Covid-19 crisis, and new entrants into the labour force also struggled.

But, on the whole, European states acted like insurers and protected workers and employers from a devastating shock. So, it should be no surprise that Europe’s

pre-pandemic labour force remained largely intact once the worst was over.

US policymakers, in contrast, are still wondering what caused 2.7 million workers to disappear during the crisis, and how to avert multiple bottlenecks in an economy where a demand overhang coexists with supply constraints.

The final reason why inflation threats are more worrying in the US is that the Fed had explicitly committed itself to keeping its powder dry.

Back in August 2020, Fed Chair Jerome Powell unveiled a new strategy whereby policymakers would aim to achieve prolonged above-target inflation after a period of below-target inflation, and would also seek to promote “maximum employment.”

The quid pro quo for such a bold rethink should have been a responsible fiscal policy. But now that Congress and the president have made the opposite choice, the Fed finds itself forced to change course precipitously.

To be sure, the ECB also faces constraints. Everybody wonders whether Italy, with public debt that has jumped to 155 per cent of GDP, will be able to place bonds with investors once the ECB starts unwinding its bond-purchase program. But at least the ECB hasn’t added a constraint of its own.

©Project Syndicate, 2022

Europe’s gas crunch can avoid worst-case outcome

GEORGE HAY

Russian President Vladimir Putin has added martial tension to Europe’s gas crisis. Europeans struggling with prices inflated by a post-pandemic supply crunch are now confronted with a possible invasion of Ukraine by the continent’s biggest gas supplier. While a conflict would clearly make things worse, a range of factors may cushion the blow.

The worst-case scenario, outlined by US administration officials, is terrifying. Russia provides about a third of Europe’s 450 billion cubic metres (bcm) of annual gas consumption, mostly via long-term contracts which

pump it through pipelines via Ukraine, Belarus, Turkey and the Baltic Sea.

If Putin closed the taps following an invasion, or if western countries imposed sanctions that barred all purchases of Russian gas, Europe would face a much bigger energy crisis.

The European Union and United Kingdom produce about 60 bcm of gas a year, according to data compiled by the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies. That’s two-fifths less than in 2017.

Meanwhile, Europe imports about 80 bcm of liquefied natural gas (LNG). While producers exported 500 bcm of LNG globally last year, meeting roughly a tenth of global gas

demand, almost 75% of that went to Asia.

As a result, Europe went into the winter with unusually low gas reserves. This gives Putin, who controls at least half of the 300 bcm of gas pumped to Europe through pipelines each year, extra leverage. Some analysts suspect he has already been holding back supply.

Russian exports flowing through Ukraine this month are much lower than usual. For European consumers struggling with gas and electricity prices that have quadrupled in the last year, further shortages could be economically catastrophic.

If Russian gas exports stopped entirely following an invasion, Russia could cope for a while.

High oil and gas prices have inflated Moscow’s already sizable \$800 billion of foreign exchange, gold and wealth fund resources.

That creates a buffer against shutting off the main export market for an industry which represents nearly two-fifths of Russian budget revenues.

But the interruption would destroy Russia’s reputation as a reliable supplier and accelerate efforts by European governments to reduce their dependence on imported gas by switching to lower-carbon energy.

Meanwhile, the potential fallout for European economies means western countries will probably stop short of imposing a total ban on Russian gas purchases: The most recent sabre-rattling is focused on restricting

financing for new gas projects.

A Russian invasion of Ukraine might still cut off the 40 bcm of gas contracted to pass through the country each year.

Meanwhile, soaring European prices have attracted LNG tankers like moths to a lamp. In recent weeks the EU and UK have imported the daily equivalent of 500 million cubic metres, more than double last year’s level.

Corporate incentives are another factor. One reason Russia has pumped less gas to Europe than expected this month is because European industrial companies and utilities like Eni have not been buying as much of it.

Supply contracts with Russian giant Gazprom allow them to take up less than the mandated

supply if they can get it cheaper elsewhere. In December the cost of buying gas a month in advance soared, creating an unusually large premium over the cost of buying from other sources on the spot market.

That gap has now narrowed. Hence European corporates are likely to buy more gas from Gazprom again next month, even if concerns about a war escalate. None of this should make Europeans feel complacent.

The uncertainty will keep gas prices high, intensifying pressure on governments to help customers with their utility bills. But the worst-case scenario in which war in Ukraine forces large sections of the bloc’s economy to shut down can be avoided.

— Reuters

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

• Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
• Choose from a wide range of brands & models
• PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
• Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

Tally
POWER OF SIMPLICITY

TALLY FOR VAT

For Tally Sales, Services or Customization

Contact: Guruprasad +968 79248644, 98753781
Email: guru.prasad@asiasolutions.net
ASIA SOLUTIONS

<https://www.asiasolutions.net>

TallyPrime

OMAN DAILY
Observer Classified Section

MONDAY JANUARY 31, 2022 JUMADA AL THANIA 28, 1443 AH

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrashdi86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

Tally is now available on the **Cloud**

Ask for FREE Demo

Think TALLY
Call 977 TALLY
(977 82559)

TSO, Tally Solutions for Oman, by Infinity Thoughts LLC : 977 TALLY (977 82559) * sales@tallysolutionsoman.com * www.TallySolutionsOman.com

TallyPrime GOLD

VAT REGISTRATION, RETURN FILING, TAX CONSULTANCY

Contact: 9246 9602 / 9723 0025

VACANCY IN SHIPPING

We are looking for candidates for the post of **Logistics Sales Executive** and **Logistics Sales Coordinator** with experience in the Freight Forwarding industry to Join our Freight Forwarding (Sea/Air) team in Oman.

Education: Graduate
Nationality: Any Nationality

Mandatory Requirements:

- Minimum 3 years Sales experience in Freight Forwarding / Shipping Logistics in Oman.
- Fluent English (preferably in Arabic also).
- Driving Licence GCC/Oman is required for Logistics Sales Executive only.

Please send your CV at careersoman90@gmail.com

المجرة للشحن اللوجستية
GCL GALAXY CARGO LOGISTICS

WORLD WIDE AIR & SEA CARGO SERVICES

Location: Rex Road, Behind Modern Oman Bakery
GSM : +968 99635330 / 93569551
Email : gcloman@hotmail.com
Website : gcloman.com

Airport to Airport
Port to Port
Door to Door
FCL Services
LCL Services
Consolidation
GCC Road Transport
Professional Packing
Moving Local & International

Quality Comes First

Tower Cranes & Passenger Lifts:

- Sales and Rental Services
- Installation
- Maintenance Service
- Breakdown Service
- Spare Parts Supply
- Hoist & Lowering
- Support Fixation
- Dismantling

Steel Fabrication Works

NEW MANARA TECHNICAL SERVICES LLC
Mobile: +968 9853 1975, 9853 1970
E-mail: info@newmanara.com / newmanaratechnical@gmail.com
Website: www.newmanara.com

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

EURO CHOICE FOODS L.L.C.
(Importers of Frozen, Chilled, Fresh & Dry Food Products)

Food Service

- Catering Supply
- Ship Chandling
- Re-export
- Fresh Fruits & Vegetables
- Fresh & Chilled Meat and Chicken
- Dairy Product & Grocery Items

Tel: +968 24435211 / 24435177
foodservice@eurochoicefoodsllc.com
www.eurochoicefoodsllc.com

*As proven in many virology lab tests

+SHYCOCAN
Virus Attenuation Device

FOR ENQUIRY, OFFER OR PURCHASE
CONTACT: 78676045

DISABLES COVID FAMILY VIRUSES

ATTENUATES COVID WITH 99.9% EFFICACY INDOORS

100% SAFE
EFFECTIVE
PLUG & PLAY
ROBUST

Dr. Monikeerthana Anandhasekar
MBBS, DPM, MRCPsych(UK)
Specialist Psychiatrist

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHIATRY

Al Salama Polyclinic
Modern Al Salama Polyclinic

TIMING:
9:00 am to 2:00 pm
5:00 pm to 9:00 pm

Emergency number **94502100**

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR INSURANCE CARDS

Appointments:
24451726 - 24455904
24451739
info@alalamana.com
www.alalamana.com
Al Mabrah (Near Traffic Signal)
Sultanate of Oman

SIT. WANTED

25 years old BS electrical engineer, having 2 years experience from Philippines in construction and telecommunication company. Having training in cable testing. Contact: 94759002.

BE Electrical Engineer with over three years experience mainly in Oil & Gas field in Oman seeks suitable placement. Also have specialised training in cable testing. Currently in Muscat on visit. Contact: 00968 93873377

21 YEARS of experience in Oman as an Accountant in different industries with 14 years of continuous service in a real estate company. Oman D/L and NOC available. Contact 92583726. Email: georgetvm@live.com

FOR RENT

Villa for rent at Azaiba, 5 bedrooms, maderoom, family halls, dining room, kitchen, parking. Contact WhatsApp: 79255270.

FLATS, 2BHK and 1 BHK in Mumtaz 99341138/ 90991079.

FLATS in Ruwi, Wadi Al Kaber and Al Khuwair. 99358589/ 97079146.

FLATS, 2BHK in Ghubrah near Indian School. 99341138/ 90991079.

A FURNISHED apartment in South Al Mabalah booked only for a small expat family is offered for rent. The apartment consists of two bedrooms with their toilets and a kitchen and has air-conditioners. The rent is RO 170 inclusive of electricity, water, gas and wifi. Contact: 99379982.

ZEN POLYNE

"TARPAULIN WAREHOUSE IN OMAN"

INDIAN BRAND BEST QUALITY LDPE TARPAULINE CROSS LAMINATED MULTI-LAYER TARPAULIN

FEATURES OF ZEN-POLYNE

- UV STABILIZED
- 100% WATER PROOF
- LIGHT WEIGHT
- THERMO - WELDED JOINTS.
- FLEXIBLE & CUSTOMISED SIZES.
- STRONGEST TARPAULIN EVER
- SUPERIOR DART IMPACT STRENGTH

RAVIRA

Please Contact: OMAN : +968 9329 1473 / 7937 1865
UAE : +971 5030 58676
Mail Id: ravirainternational@gmail.com Web: www.ravira.net

apave Apave Gulf LLC

We are hiring! Only Omani Nationals

- HSE Advisor (NEBOSH IGC / IOSH Certified)
- Plant Inspector (API Certified - 570 / 653 / 510)
- NDT Inspector (ASNT Level II in Ultrasonic Testing)
- Data Analyst (Experience in Data entry operation and MS Office - Excel & Word skill is essential)
- Mechanical Piping Draftsman (AutoCAD experience)

Fresh graduates those who are willing to undergo certain technical training may also apply

Please submit your application with latest CV and contact numbers to: Email: info-gulf@apave.com

M M T CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR SERVICE

MUSCAT: 95605353, 95605454
BARKA: 95893242, 93743308
SOHAR: 96773031, 95347988
FALAJ: 94002341, 95136067
SALALAH: 94575905, 97858656
DUQUIM: 97218831, 94002341

ROAD, SEA & AIR TRANSPORT WORLD WIDE

GTC Building, Near Badr Al Sama Hospital, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
E-mail: mmtcargo@yahoo.com
Customer Care: 96773031 / 97695454

Sea Cargo 800 Bz/Kg Express Cargo to Kerala 5 to 7 days*

FOR RENT

Substantial Villa in Hay Al Shatti near Grand Hayatt. 3 Floors with 40 Rooms, 22 Bathrooms which is suitable for Embassy / Clinic / School / Multipurpose Office / Residential Premises.

TEL : 99643760 / 24704994

AL NAMANI CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR AIR & SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

ALL OVER INDIA EXPRESS DELIVERY

Online Tracking

TOLL FREE NUMBER **80066766**

24/7 Service Available
www.alnamanicargo.com

INDIA | BANGLADESH | INDONESIA | PHILIPPINES | SRI LANKA | ETHIOPIA | ALL GCC SERVICE AVAILABLE

95587410, 99785420, 99638698, 98523831

22 YEARS OF EXCELLENT SERVICE IN OMAN

HO: RUWI - HAMRIYA, GHALA, AL AMRAT, SEEB, SOHAR, SUWAIQ

Al Eman Dental Clinic

Flat 22, Floor 2
Abu Zaki Trading Building
Opp. Al Nahda Hospital
Sultan Qaboos Street

+968 24834113
+968 97454854
+968 96438854

Our Mission: To preserve your teeth and smile for a lifetime

SERVICES

A LEGAL translation office needs **Marketeers**. Contact E-mail: oman4n@gmail.com

AUTOCAD/REVIT ARCH MEP, part/ full- time. Contact WhatsApp: 79037728.

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. 94301888.

VIGAS CARGO
WORLD WIDE DOOR TO DOOR

Transportation, Packing & Cargo Services

- CARGO SERVICES BY AIR & SEA WORLD WIDE
- DOOR TO DOOR DELIVERY IN INDIA, INDONESIA & UK
- PROFESSIONAL PACKERS & MOVERS
- MUSCAT - DUBAI - MUSCAT REGULAR TRANSPORT

H.O. Ruwi 99851366 92495068

Ghubrah : 93571703
Falaj : 93571704
Store : 93571823
Misfa : 98119561
93260956

vigas.cargo@yahoo.com

USED SHEET METAL FABRICATION MACHINES

(Ideal for Manufacturing of Electrical / Switchgear Panels, Steel Enclosures, Steel Doors, Steel Furniture, S.S. Steel Fabrication)

- CNC - PRESS BRAKE - Rarely used (Bending Machine) - Turkey
- Shearing Machine 3m x 6mm - Taiwan
- Spot Welding Machines - Italy
- Mig Welding Machines - Italy
- Tig Welding Machines - Italy
- Hydraulic Power Press - Italy
- Notching Machine - Italy
- Shark - Bandsaw - Italy
- Variety of Dies
- 1mm Galvanised Steel Sheet 4 x 8 (JSW India) - Bundles of 100
- Also available: Shutting Jacks, Concrete Mixer - Big & Small, Core Cutting Machine (All rarely used)

Contact : RIYAN OVERSEAS LLC
Mob : 9282 2121 / 9985 5801 - Email : mail@riyanmuscat.com

AL KHOORY EQUIPMENT EST.
P.O.Box 545, P.C. 117, Al Wadi Al Kabir Area, Sultanate of Oman

Official distributor of **Green Electric**

Stockist & Wholesaler of Low Voltage Switchgear Products and a One Stop Solution for all Switchgear Products and Assembly

Schneider Electric Lovato DAB WEG Franklin Electric

Tel: +968 24832474, +968 79474556
E-mail: alkhoory@omantel.net.om * www.alkhooryoman.com

PRIME MOVERS FOR SALE

4x2 Mercedes Model 2010
4x2 Mercedes Model 2009
6x4 Mercedes Model 2011

Please contact: 9321 2634

SIT VACANT

SIT VACANT URGENT NEED Urgently required 1 No. Crusher Operator with minimum 5 years experiences in crusher machine, operating for a leading crusher in Sultanate of Oman . Kindly call 25542760/25540330. E-mail: scpsfur@hotmail.com

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocoraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

trust only in the best

OUR SERVICES

- CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE
- OIL & GAS EQUIPMENT TRADING
- MANPOWER SUPPLY
- TRANSPORTATION & HEAVY EQUIPMENT RENTAL
- ANTI-CORROSION COATING

TECHNICAL FOR GENERAL TRADING & CONTRACTING SPC

Office no: 31, 3rd floor, Building no: 537, Street no: 5016, Area- 24
P.O.Box: 123, P.C: 113, Ghala, Muscat

22386444 / 96790700
info@hitech-oman.com
HI-TECH GROUP KOWAT

www.hitech-oman.com www.hitechkw.com

مخازن مغلقة ومبردة للإيجار في الدقم
COLD & CLOSE STRORES FOR RENT AT DUQM

79111172
99333223
97777456
94111118

مميزات المخازن
- موقع استراتيجي وقريب من ميناء الدقم
- مواقف بمساحات كبيرة مهيأة بالانترنولك
- مساحة لكل مخزن

CAREER OPPORTUNITY

SALES EXECUTIVE (OMANI)

- Minimum 2-3 years of experience.
- Strength to generate business.
- Excellent track record in customer service.
- Excellent verbal & written communication in English & Arabic.
- Knowledge of **Automotive Products**.

The job offers competitive salary, excellent working environment and career growth.

Interested candidates should send CV on alamana@alamana-oman.com
TEL: +968 24815080, FAX: +968 24817554

ALAMANA
Leading Suppliers of Building Materials

features

OMAN OBSERVER f t i y t u v w x z www.omanobserver.om editor@omanobserver.om

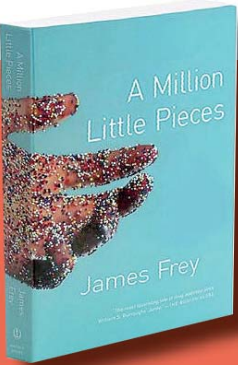
This Lithuanian was bewitched by the Oman Pavilion at Expo 2020

Boleta Senkiene, Honorary Consul of the Sultanate of Oman in Lithuania, flew all the way to Dubai in order to witness the dramatic and also historic Omani Pavilion. What she discovered is an icon that links the old and new, the present with all the beautiful promise of tomorrow... **P20**



GASTRONOMY

READ



A MILLION LITTLE PIECES

by James Frey
Originally sold as a memoir and later marketed as a semi-fictional novel following accusations of literary forgery. It tells the story of a 23-year-old alcoholic and abuser of other drugs and how he copes with rehabilitation in a twelve steps-oriented treatment centre.

Dining with the zombies and vampires

A restaurant in Saudi Arabia is offering patrons in the kingdom a unique experience — dishes with a side of skull and blood in the company of zombies and vampires.

The restaurant, “Shadows”, caters to horror film buffs with strong stomachs, allowing them to savour their dishes while staff in gory costumes put on interactive shows.

It’s located in the Boulevard entertainment district of the capital Riyadh and has opened as the Gulf country seeks to welcome tourists.

“I came here to have fun and laugh... but the atmosphere and the shows are actually very scary”, one diner, Nora al Assad, told AFP.

“I’ve lost my appetite”, added



the 26-year-old who works in human resources, as a waiter presented her meal on a tray

with a smiling black skull. Her friend, Jawaher Abdullah, a doctor, was more

than thrilled to wolf down her dinner.

“I like horror in general... I think the atmosphere is great and lots of fun”, she said, before taking a selfie with a performer with a fake bleeding chest wound.

For businessman Sleiman al Amri, the restaurant experience caters to his hunger for a good adrenaline rush.

“We’re always looking for new and exciting things to do in Riyadh”, said the 45-year-old, dining with his family.

Amri, donning the traditional dishdasha robe, added: “Going to restaurants used to be about eating, getting full, chatting and we’d go back home.

“But now we are eating, we are enjoying our time — and we’re also terrified.”

— AFP



find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



faisal_alho0ti • Follow
Oman



MOUNTAIN RETREAT



the_happy_wandering_soul • Follow
Dhofar Wind Farm



WHERE THE WIND BLOWS



ahmed.click • Follow
Butala Jhanda Singh, Punjab, Pakistan



THE COLOUR OF THE DARK

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use

#OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.



AROUND THE WORLD

FASHION

Fashion Dispenses a Happy Little Pill



IT PROBABLY ISN'T surprising that a current of conservatism was seen in the menswear shows here, a link connecting storied labels like Dior and Hermès, where designers Kim Jones and Véronique Nichanian produced fall collections that highlighted their design chops by doubling down on heritage.

An inveterate and lifelong traveller (he has often said he works mainly to bankroll his wanderlust), Jones often operates within a geographic thematic. Last season, it was a collaboration with Travis Scott, inspired by the rapper's Houston hometown. (The collection was postponed indefinitely after the Astroworld tragedy.) This time Jones detoured to safer territory and, for a 75th-anniversary homage to the house at Dior Men, chose as his destination — drumroll — Paris.

Jones' City of Light was conjured as a place of Gallic elegance and refinement with a set that not only reproduced the gilded Pont Alexandre III bridge for its backdrop but went on to mine just about every French cliché in the postcard rack.

Think (gorgeously) tailored coats of slate or dove gray, some with a complicated draped wrap at the front. Think blazer coats with white over stitching and cut as if to reveal the selvedge edge of the fabric. Think sling-back suede Birkenstocks patterned on the soles with the Dior logo. Think, for Pete's sake, berets.

True, the berets were the work of Stephen Jones, an inspired British hatter who has worked with Dior for a quarter-century. True also, tourist shops all along the Rue de Rivoli still sell 5-euro versions of this felt pancake for your head. Yet there is no avoiding the fact that Parisians wearing berets are rarer than Parisians walking down the street with baguettes tucked under their arms.

Nichanian, too, plays on these French idioms, although at an even more elevated (and pricier) level. Season after season, she makes clothes suitable for the clientele of a brand that started in 1837 as a saddlery and remains a purveyor of goods for a traditional carriage trade. (Well, sort of. The company's vaunted Birkin, the Rabus of handbags, has now been joined by the Rock, a new and jacked-up version ostensibly for guys.)

The presentation was held in a national storehouse for furniture and against a backdrop of projected tapestries from state collections, and before it, Nichanian spoke to some journalists about her intended "dandy effect." Conceivably, that means a collection generally pitched towards the younger guys everyone in the business has been trying to advance from hoodies to suits. Here one was rendered in a two-button calfskin with a wide leg that made you wish Miles Davis were alive to rock one. Davis, though, would certainly take one of those silk cashmere scarves that Nichanian substituted for a cravat and knot it outside his shirt.

Elswhere on the roster were designers with all kinds of promise but also with positions and ideas. At GmbH, Serhat Isik and Benjamin Huseby produced a finely tailored collection that seemed destined, as usual, to influence designers at much larger houses. Whoever cast Virgil Abloh's final, and predictably mournful, collection for Louis Vuitton, for instance, must have had an eye on GmbH's runways. — **NYT**

CULTURE

Poland's pigeon fanciers eye moving up the pecking order



OPENING ONE OF his many cages, Michal Trojczak watches proudly as more than 70 dusty-blue pigeons take flight, soaring high above snow-covered fields in eastern Poland.

"My birds are athletes," says the 42-year-old pigeon fancier, who inherited his passion for breeding the birds from his father and grandfather.

Poland boasts Europe's biggest community of homing pigeon breeders — and a string of international competition trophies — but trails other countries in the breeding of pedigree birds that command a higher value.

As one of those who has decided to do something about that, Trojczak said he had turned professional after retiring from the army a few years ago and teamed up with a friend.

Together, they bought Belgian pigeons with prestigious pedigrees, investing thousands of euros, including 11,000 euros (\$12,400) alone for the progeny of a bird called Porsche 911.

"He's provided us with a lot of satisfaction and money," the ex-army captain tells AFP.

Now, he hopes the sky's the limit for Polish pigeon-enthusiasts who, he believes, will rise to rival their Belgian and Dutch counterparts within a decade.

BIRDS OF COMMUNICATION

Pigeon lofts are a part of Poland's landscape especially in the mining region of Silesia, where pigeon breeding has historic roots and the birds enjoy near-mythic status.

After a day underground, it's still common to see miners emerge into the daylight, scanning the skies for their winged friends.

Released hundreds of kilometres (miles) from their pigeon lofts, the birds find their way home thanks to an ability to detect the earth's magnetic field

and orient themselves according to the sun.

Flying with the wind, they can reach up to 120 kilometres (74 miles) per hour.

After Poland won back its independence in 1918, the use, breeding and racing of pigeons was regulated by the military affairs ministry due to the strategic importance of the birds' ability to carry communications.

The Nazis immediately banned pigeon breeding after occupying Poland in 1939, and enthusiasts were forced to start again from scratch after the war.



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

"With more than 40,000 members, we're the largest organisation of its kind in Europe, founded more than 100 years ago," said Krzysztof Kawaler, head of the Polish association of homing pigeon breeders.

France and Belgium — where pigeon fancying has deep roots — have around 11,000 and 13,000 breeders respectively, according to their associations.

"We take home the most prizes at international competitions," Kawaler told AFP at a trade fair in Katowice, in the heart of the Silesia region.

Those tournaments do not see the pigeons congregate in one place, as world athletes do at the Olympics.

Instead, every country holds

its own local races in which the pigeons are equipped with electronic rings to record their flight time.

The results are calculated across the countries using coefficients that notably take into account the number of participating pigeons.

Since Poland has so many breeders, it helps boost its scores, according to Trojczak.

"But it doesn't reflect the pigeons' actual worth," he stresses, lamenting that Polish pigeon fanciers are still viewed as amateurs in Western Europe.

In Western Europe, however, prices start at around 200 euros but can go sky high, like the Belgian pigeon, Armando, which fetched 1.25 million euros at auction in 2019.

The buyer was Chinese, as was the proud new owner of New Kim, another Belgian bird which sold for 1.6 million euros the following year.

Like racehorses, it is the pedigree — the bird's family tree — that matters to buyers, especially those from Asia. — **AFP**

A LOOK AT THE ACADEME



Dr Zainab al Ajmi
zeinbf@moe.om

The Concept of Curriculum Design and Curriculum Evaluation

THE CURRICULUM design and evaluation process contain what will be taught, who will be taught, and how it will be taught. Each component affects and interacts with the other. For example, what will be taught is affected by who is being taught (e.g., their growth, maturity, and abilities) (El Sawi, 1996). In addition, the curriculum should be an advantageous tool to assist teachers in the development of students' skills, methods, and materials necessary for them to be successful. A curriculum development is a creative and inventive part of the curriculum designing process. Therefore, developers are obliged both professionally and ethically to meet the needs of the students, and all development processes should be relevant to the socio-economic context and objectively foresee the future.

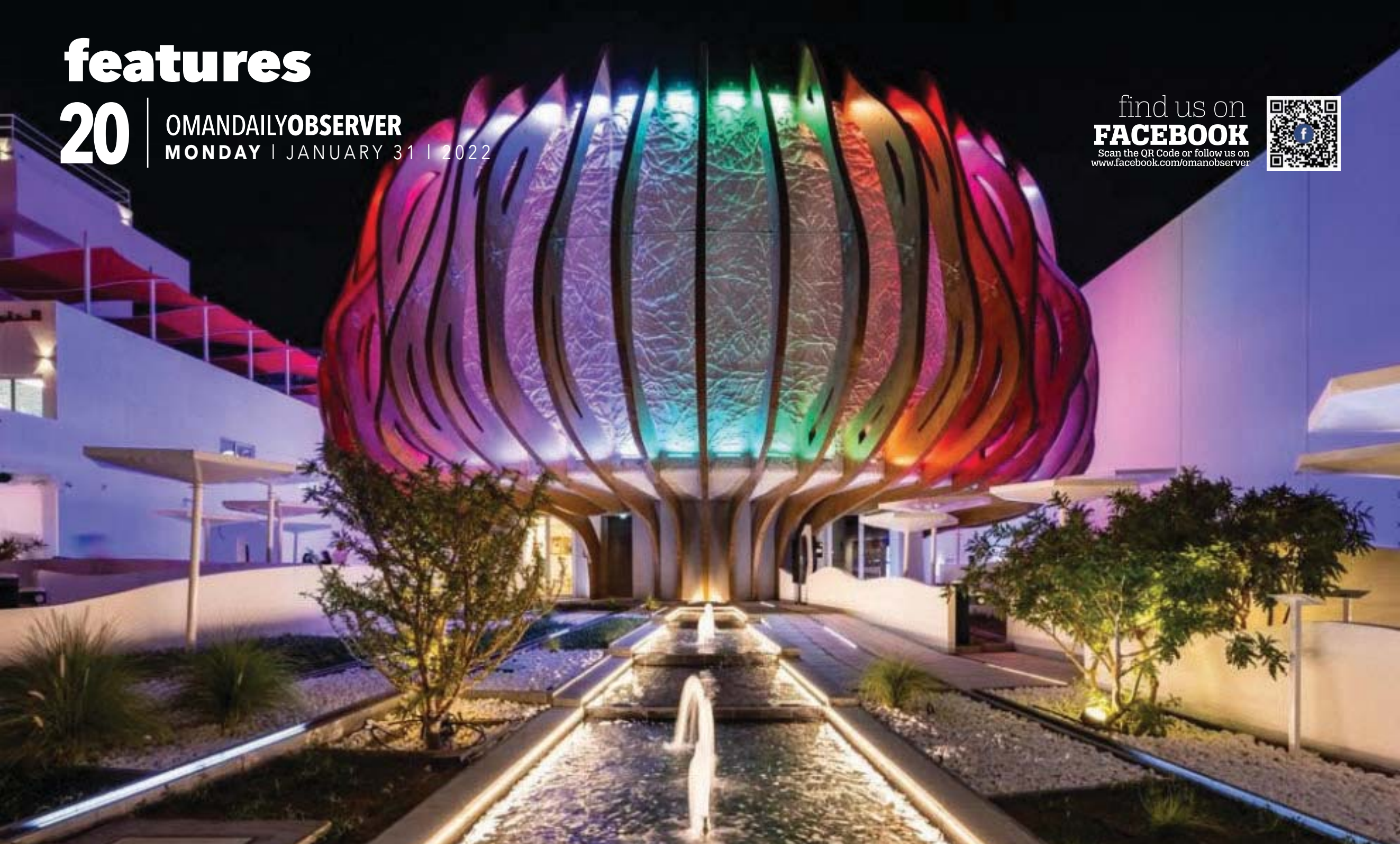
The curriculum development of the Sultanate of Oman is conducted over two academic years with continuous evaluation and annual reports to provide a comprehensive systematic review. In order for curriculum development to be effective and successful, the developers and the educational researchers must fulfil an annual requirement to develop the programme. The curriculum development process is based on the philosophy of education and Oman's vision, "Oman Vision 2040". To this end, the ministry of education seeks to keep pace with developments through the enhancement of content and teaching methods, in addition, there are many projects were initiated in order to develop the curricula and to keep pace with the continuous changes in the world.

For all curricula, there are basic components, each component related to each other and to the curriculum development process. Furthermore, it shows the interaction and relationships of the essential phases of the curriculum development process. These essential phases are including four processes: Planning,

Content & Methods, Implementation, and Evaluation and Reporting. Each process has several steps or is completed in a logical sequence. These steps are not always separate and distinct but may overlap and occur concurrently (El Sawi, 1996). It should be noted that the curriculum development team is involved in all the processes and steps.

As a new curriculum is developed, it is required to be evaluated, and consequently, the next phase of the curriculum development process is curriculum evaluation. This process is based on scientific research methodology and takes place throughout one academic year. Although the methodology of curriculum evaluation is important and complex, the researcher should have been equipped with skills of empirical research, a knowledge of common curriculum elements, a knowledge of the subject matter to be taught, and furthermore adequate experience of teaching it. According to (White, 1971), "there is no single process of curriculum evaluation: there are many different forms of it. All (or most) of them can and should play a part in assessing whether a new curriculum is any good, whether it is worth adopting it. This is the ultimate point of all curriculum evaluations. A curriculum has not been positively evaluated in this full sense until it has been shown to have clear objectives and appropriate means to achieve them and to connect with the abilities of those pupils for whom it is designed".

To summarise, the curriculum has a significant role in the effectiveness or failure of an educational programme. Hence, successful curriculum development and revision should be to meet the needs of the society, and the expectations of the future. Therefore, the curriculum development and evaluation process are occurring continuously over a period of review, revising, and constant change.



This Lithuanian was bewitched by the Oman Pavilion at Expo 2020

By Kabeer Yousuf

Just as the Sultanate of Oman pavilion at the Expo 2020 continue to receive close to a million visitors since it started on October 1, last year, the global media has been abuzz with the myriad attractions of the same, pulling a steady stream of spectators to the global festival.

Boleta Senkiene, Honorary Consul of the Sultanate of Oman in Lithuania flew into Dubai to cherish her fond memories of Oman that she used to have from time to time during her visit is all spellbound to witness how the nation has been replicated at the venue.

"It is not easy to describe the feeling I had inside and outside the Oman pavilion in Dubai", Boleta Senkiene said. "It is elegant, modern, growing towards the skies and wavy. Stone and wooden elements, water and natural trees — all goes perfectly hand in hand with the new technology so that a visitor finds inspiration at every turn".

Boleta told the *Observer*. According to her, Oman has chosen a way to present itself to the world as a land of amber, which is somewhat similar to Lithuania too has chosen to project itself as a land of amber. The nation, which is not dissimilar to Lithuania in terms of the population, has also chosen its natural treasure as its symbol. It is no less famous than amber, the sweet-scented frankincense.

The edifice is quite literally immersed in the scent of frankincense, one of the luxurious aromatic resins in the world. The exterior takes its inspiration in Boswellia, a desert tree that produces the aromatic resin that, dried, eventually forms pieces of frankincense. The tree, which in Dubai appears in a rather other-worldly shape, is a sea of frankincense inside. In the broader context, frankincense speaks both of long history (with what is now Oman known to have traded frankincense with the world

for at least 5,000 years) and modern globalism as all kinds of ties have never been more intense than nowadays.

The solution has made a profound impression on Boleta who has already visited the Oman pavilion in Dubai twice.

She said Oman has been remarkably successful over the past several decades in matching its rich history and traditional culture with investment into modern society, including education, medicine, infrastructure, tourism, industry and other sectors. The links between the old and new, the today and tomorrow are among the hey ideas behind the concept of the Oman pavilion at the Expo Dubai.

As it has become routine, you're invited to disinfect your hands before entering. Do not even look for a traditional dispenser this time. Instead, get closer to the smoking vessel. Immerse your palms into the "smoke" and keep them there for a while. That's disinfection the Omani way. Smelling of frankincense, no doubt. Your hands will now carry some of the aromas with you.

In Lithuania, amber is found at the Baltic Sea only. In Oman, frankincense is also "grown" in the only region, Dhofar, at the border with Yemen. It is only there that the sea, the hills and the desert all create ideal conditions for Boswellia. In Latin, by the way, its name is Boswellia sacra. A simple yet delicate procedure of cutting the bark of the tree is required to get the "sacred" resin. They then dry and harden in the heat to form nuggets of various shapes and colours. They are used to make aromatic oils and fragrances, as well as for medicinal purposes.

Frankincense has been the pride of Oman for many centuries. It is no wonder then that the living Boswellia inside the pavilion has found its place in the best spot, near the entrance and even on a special pedestal. It is here that the visitors are invited to stop and spend several minutes delving into the history of frankincense by watching a film about the miraculous tree and its legendary produce projected on one of the walls.

Even the large-scale industrial and infrastructure projects currently under way in Oman are presented with the stylised Boswellia in the background. The video of Omani music also follows the theme of the fragrant substance.

In the European view, some projects on display might seem somewhat exotic, such as the scheme of planting one million date palms all over Oman. Or the botanic garden which, under a roof, will house a variety of plants native to much cooler regions of the world.

Inside the Crystal Hall, the "crystal" domes suspended from the ceiling serve as information points telling dozens of stories about Oman, beginning with nature and history and down to investment and tourism. Frankincense included, surely. Could it be that mankind will use the odorous gum when it decides to settle on Mars? The aromas of frankincense, by the way, are different inside the pavilion: Pure, lemon and rose-scented.

"This time, Oman has chosen frankincense as a symbol of the entire nation. I think that's just a great job", Boleta quipped.

Oman's Ministry of Transport, Communication and Information Technology, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and Oman Air are taking an active part in the Expo 2020.

"Seeking greater participation from across the globe, we have organised visits for honorary consuls to visit the Oman Pavilion in cooperation with Foreign Ministry. The visit also included showcasing investment opportunities at the pavilion's Opportunity Centre", said Mohsin bin Khamis al Balushi, Adviser, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) and Commissioner General of the Sultanate of Oman for the Expo 2020.

According to available statistics, the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion received an average of 6,000 visitors a day and in the first week, the number of visitors crossed 81,071 and the number was steadily increasing. But with travel restrictions imposed in some countries due to the ongoing Covid-19 and Omicron, the number is more or less steady, thanks to the enthusiasm that Expo 2020 has been creating.

The Luban outlet at the pavilion contains more than 1,500 products from more than 400 Omani small and medium businesses, family businesses, craftsmen and rural women. This embodies the opportunities that the Omani pavilion can provide through the Expo.

